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THE

HIGHLAND CASTLE,

AND THE

LOWLAND COTTAGE.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ROSALIA ST. CLAIR,

AUTHOR OF THE SON OF O'DONNEL, BLIND BEGGAR, &c. &c.

Like April-morning clouds, that pass,
With varying shadow, o'er the grass,
And imitate, on field and furrow,
Life's chequer'd scene of joy and sorrow.
WALTER SCOTT.

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1820.

THE

HIGHLAND CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

"If matches are not better made,
Said Hymen, I'll forswear my trade,
Who'll squabble for a pin, a feather,
And wonder how they came together.
The husband's sullen, dogged, shy;
The wife grows flippant in reply.
He loves command and due restriction;
And she as well likes contradiction."

POSSESSION is vulgarly said to be nine points in law—in the island of Jamaica it may be termed all the points at once. Leaving Bouverie Frazer, therefore, to grope his way through all the intricacies of *deeds, and leases, and*

sub-leases, and powers of attorney, accumulated for the last fifty years, and to resist the blandishments of the notary's fair daughter, we will return to Mary, whom we left sorrowing at the silence of her lover.

The London winter was now in its meridian glory; the thoughtless Henrietta was become a decided votary of fashion, and neither the friendly hints of lady Riversdale, the playful expostulations of Mary, nor the stern disapprobation of her husband, had the power to arrest her in the mad career.

The constant companion of Mrs. Lessington, she hurried from one scene of amusement to another; and when sir Theodosius and she met, which was seldom now the case except at the dinner-table, a species of polite and covert warfare was carried on between them. But so rapidly had Henrietta improved her natural talent for sarcasm under the able tuition of her new friend, that she seldom

seldom failed to silence the baronet, without infringing, in the smallest degree, the rules of good breeding.

In proportion to the awe with which the highly-polished ridicule of his fashionable wife inspired the baronet, was the secret hatred which he began to nourish towards her. His time was now wholly spent in those circles where she seldom appeared, or in brooding over, in his own chamber, the folly and madness which had linked his fate with that of a heartless coquette.

While thus contemplating, through the distorted medium of discontent, the faults and failings of the innocent but imprudent Henrietta, he ceased to remember that it was he himself who had exposed her to the allurements of the tempter. Had he not been in the power of Mrs. Lessington, never would she have sought out his wife; or had he frankly explained the tie by which she held his haughty spirit in thraldom, lady Beau-

mont would have fled from her society in disgust.

The continual domestic jarrings in Berkley-square rendered the residence of Mary extremely unpleasant; yet, knowing the situation of her revered friends in Scotland, she forbore to make them acquainted with her real feelings on the subject, well aware that no inconvenience to themselves would, under such circumstances, withhold them from immediately recalling her.

Henrietta, when they did meet, evinced towards her the same regard as at first; but as Mary had decidedly refused to follow her steps through the whirl of dissipation in which she was engaged, they seldom saw each other but in the presence of company. The truth was, that lady Beaumont, dissatisfied with herself, and dreading the mild reproving eyes of her friend, shrunk from allowing her an opportunity of expostulation.

In

In proportion, however, to the neglect with which Mary was treated by lady Beaumont, did the baronet exercise towards her all the delicate attentions of hospitality. Frequently would he read to her for an hour or two in the morning; at other times he would favour her with valuable critical remarks on the labours of her pencil, or listen to her as she struck the chords of Henrietta's harp. Never had he breathed in her ear the most distant hint of his dissatisfaction at the manner in which her friend spent her hours; but Mary could not, with all her modesty, fail to observe that he not unfrequently made comparisons between them, unfavourable to his volatile helpmate.

This consciousness sometimes imparted a degree of awkwardness and restraint to the manners of the elegant girl in the presence of the baronet, which was painful to herself; and after a while she pass-

ed most of her time in the solitude of her own dressing-room.

From lady Riversdale and her charming daughter she experienced the most unremitting kindness; but, unfortunately for his peace of mind, the virtues and charms of the lovely orphan had made too powerful an impression on the heir of that noble house.

With the frankness of his ingenuous nature, he made known to his mother the passion with which Mary had inspired him, and, possessing a mind far superior to the trammels of worldly distinctions, her ladyship seemed inclined to overlook the want of title and fortune in the woman of his choice, in consideration of her amiable manners and the virtues of her heart.

Thus authorized, lord Riversdale made an offer of his hand and fortune to the desolate orphan. Surprise kept her for a few moments silent; but, penetrated

ed with gratitude at such disinterested attachment, she unhesitatingly declared the inviolable engagements by which she was bound to another.

Though deeply affected by the destruction of his air-built vision of happiness, he retired with increased respect for the frankness and candour of her whom he must henceforth regard in no other light than that of a valued friend.

The esteem with which Mary had inspired lady Riversdale, from the first moment of her introduction, was greatly augmented by her conduct towards her son; but she saw the propriety of wholly detaching him from the society of the charming girl, till time and reflection had completely restored his peace of mind.

With this view she prepared to pay a long-promised visit to an aunt of her late husband's residing in Dublin, accompanied by his lordship and his sister. The loss of her society and that of the lively Jane was severely felt by Mary,

whose health began to suffer from the delicate situation in which she was placed in the family of the baronet, and her constant anxiety for the safety of her lover.

Strength and appetite forsook her, her eyes lost their wonted animation, and her cheeks their bloom; yet, absorbed in selfish pleasures, Henrietta was heedless of the change till it was forced upon her notice by the baronet.

Mary, fatigued one morning with listening to a humorous description given by her lively friend, to half a dozen loungers at her breakfast-table, of an entertainment at which she had been present the night before, rose, and with languid steps left the room. In a short time she was surprised by the appearance of Henrietta, who throwing her arms round her neck, burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"You are ill—you are dying!" exclaimed her impetuous ladyship, "and I have

I have remained insensible to your danger. We must have medical advice directly; I shall never forgive myself for my inattention."

Mary was affected by this proof of lady Beaumont's affection, and returning her caresses, she replied with a placid smile—"Not ill, not dying, my kind friend; but the unpleasant circumstances in which my best and earliest friends are placed, and my own desolate condition, at times weigh heavy on my heart, and unfit me to join in the pastimes of the gay and prosperous."

The wasted form of Mary too forcibly contradicted her assertion of being in perfect health, to gain implicit credence from the warm-hearted Henrietta, who, in spite of her thoughtless folly, was sincerely attached to the lovely girl.

Conceiving her altered looks to proceed, in some measure, from confinement, she insisted that Mary should ac-

company her in an airing to Richmond, and together they descended to the breakfast-parlour, to wait the appearance of the carriage.

As they entered, sir Theodosius was alone, seated in a musing posture, with his arms leaning on the table.—"I thank you, my dear sir," said Henrietta, with one of her sweetest smiles, "for calling the attention of your thoughtless wife to the altered looks of this dear girl. I believe her ailments proceed from too much confinement, and I have prescribed for her a drive to Richmond. Have you gallantry enough this morning to become our escort?"

"With pleasure," replied the baronet, with vivacity, pressing the hand of his lovely wife. "Act ever thus, Henrietta," he murmured, "and happiness may still be ours."

As the carriage was brought round, that of Mrs. Lessington drove up to the door.

door.—" Fiend!" ejaculated sir Theodosius, as he saw her alight, " art thou destined for ever to cross my path?"

Entering, she bowed to the baronet, and scarcely deigning to bestow the slightest sign of recognition on Mary, took the arm of Henrietta, saying—" Come, my dear, I want you to go to Willis's rooms; all the world will be there to witness the sale of the dowager lady Glenwinnoch's nick-nacks. Fill your purse," she added, in a whisper, " for a continued run of ill luck has emptied mine."

" I am going abroad this morning," lady Beaumont replied, " and am sorry I cannot accompany you."

" Cannot! Why, that sounds like rebellion in the court of fashion. And what may prevent you, give me leave to inquire?"

" The health of my friend has greatly suffered from too close confinement, and the carriage waits to take us to Rich-

mond this morning," rejoined her ladyship.

"Nonsense! leave her to the care of sir Theodosius: take my word for it, he will prove the most effectual physician of the two."

But the determined manner in which Henrietta replied—"I have no intention to put his abilities to the test in the present case," convinced the wily votary of fashion that this was no proper time to exert her ridicule; and taking her leave, she carelessly said—"Well, jesting apart, I hope Miss Ferguson's illness is not of such a serious nature as to warrant your ladyship's apprehensions;" and without waiting for a reply, she hurried to her carriage.

Mrs. Lessington had no sooner departed, than smoothing his angry brow, sir Theodosius led his fair companions to the carriage, and they proceeded on their excursion.

It was still early spring, but the air was

was mild for the season. The minds of the little party were attuned to harmony; and the proposal of dining and spending the day at Richmond, made by the baronet, was cheerfully assented to by the ladies.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

———————Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of Holy Writ. SHAKESPEARE.

IT has been already observed, that the errors of Henrietta proceeded rather from thoughtlessnes than any radical defect in her disposition. She regarded Mary with the affection of a sister; but, fascinated by the elegant manners and bold pretensions of Mrs. Lessington, she had resigned herself in every thing to the guidance of this dangerous woman.

Hurried by her from one scene of folly and dissipation to another, reflection was either wholly banished from her bosom, or hastily dismissed as an unpleasant intruder.

When Mary left the breakfast-table, her

her altered figure and melancholy countenance struck the baronet more forcibly than usual, from being contrasted with the mirthful look and sparkling eyes of lady Beaumont.

Interrupting her, therefore, in the midst of a ludicrous description of the antiquated marquis of P———, he abruptly inquired, in a tone of asperity, what might be her ladyship's intentions regarding Miss Ferguson?—"As the unbounded friendship you formerly professed for her seems now," he continued, "to have degenerated into complete indifference, I could wish you would find time to inform her friends of her situation, and not suffer her to die unregarded in a land of strangers."

Henrietta waited for no more; conscience-stricken, she flew to the apartment of her friend, where the scene already described took place.

The trio reached Richmond in the happiest frame of mind possible, and while

while dinner was preparing, strolled into the park, and bent their steps towards the river. The day continued bright and calm; the trees were fast putting forth their leaves, and the feathered tribes, rejoicing in the renovation of nature, made the groves resound with their melodious notes. The combination of sylvan sounds and images by which they were surrounded was soothing to the perturbed and anxious feelings of Mary, while, to her more gay and happy companion, the contrast which the peaceful calm of the country afforded to the noisy scenes of mirth and revelry in which she had of late been a constant actor, imparted to them at least the charm of novelty; and the little party returned to town at a late hour in the evening, highly delighted with the day's excursion.

The next morning beheld the ladies on horseback by twelve o'clock. Escorted by sir Theodosius, they rode to Kensington,

sington, and returned by Hyde Park. Passing through Grosvenor-gate, they encountered the equipage of Mrs. Lessington. By her side was seated a gentleman rather above the middle age, whose air and dress indicated him to be a foreigner of distinction. As she saluted the equestrians, Mary observed a peculiar expression pass over her countenance, which, in spite of the exertion of her reason, made her shudder—it was composed of scorn and deep malignity; but, transient as the meteor's glare, it instantly disappeared.

They had not returned above an hour, Mary had retired to her own chamber, and sir Theodosius and his lady were engaged in a lively conversation, when the door opened, and Mrs. Lessington entered. She was alone, and made no mention of her foreign companion.

Giving a hand to each—"Do you know, baronet," she playfully said, "that you have been arraigned, and but for me

me would have been condemned, in the court of fashion, this morning assembled at the duchess of ———'s, for the high crime and misdemeanour of being twice the attendant of your *wife* in her morning rides. But I pled in your behalf, that the fair friend of her ladyship was also of the party; as I myself had seen, and the sentence has been remitted for consideration."

Sir Theodosius bit his lip, and looked disconcerted, but Henrietta, in the same playful strain assumed by her visitor, replied—" My dear Lessington, are you ignorant that I and my *caro sposo* conceive ourselves of sufficient consequence to set the example of love and marriage, and that we possess even the courage to meditate appearing together in the same box at the opera? I trust you will be present this evening to witness so novel an exhibition."

Mrs. Lessington saw with dismay that her poor fluttering captive meditated

tated an escape from her toils; but too good a general to betray her doubts, she immediately changed her tact to meet the present humour of her intended victim, and Mary just then entering the room, she inquired, with an appearance of interest, into the state of her health.

The dignified girl replied with perfect politeness, but with a frigidity that would have deterred any farther advances from a less determined spirit than that of Mrs. Lessington.—"Your friends," said that lady, "are going to exhibit love and marriage at the opera to-night, and I am invited to become a spectator: will you oblige me, my dear Miss Ferguson, by taking a seat in my box?"

"I have already agreed to accompany sir Theodosius and lady Beaumont, and can only entreat, madam, that you will accept my acknowledgments for your polite offer;" and Mary began to examine

mine some drawings which lay scattered on the table, without bestowing any farther notice on their visitor.

"Dearly shalt thou pay for this insolence, haughty fair one!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Lessington, as she arose to take leave, saying she would meet them in the evening.

For several weeks lady Beaumont paid the most unremitting and delicate attentions to her friend; but though grateful for her kindness, Mary felt no relief to her anxiety amidst those scenes of gaiety to which she frequently accompanied her friend. The evident change of Mrs. Lessington's conduct towards her also filled the mind of the upright girl with disgust; for in place of the marked neglect of her former behaviour, she now treated her with the most overweening kindness. Her taste was appealed to on every doubtful occasion; her conversation was assiduously courted;

courted; and no party of pleasure was ever projected without Mary being pressed to join in it.

With the unhappy, time seems to lag in his course. Not much longer, however, was Mary doomed to undergo that painful state of suspense which was fast sapping her health and peace; for the packet by which Frazer had forwarded his letters, though detained longer than usual by light baffling winds, at length safely reached port, and she had the happiness to peruse the transcript of feelings in unison with her own. A very few days after, she received a second letter, which had been forwarded a month later than the former, although both reached Britain nearly at the same time.

Thus relieved from her worst fears, the health and spirits of the sweet orphan recovered as if by the effect of magic. Henrietta rejoiced at the change, without critically examining the cause: not

not so the artful Mrs. Lessington; she neglected no circumstance, however apparently trifling, which she thought had the most remote tendency to sow disunion between the youthful friends, or give a stab to the peace of sir Theodosius.

Observing the uncommon elevation of Mary's spirits, she hinted with a smile to lady Beaumont that it proceeded undoubtedly either from her having heard from an absent lover, or come to an understanding with a present one, at the same time fixing her eyes with an expression of peculiar meaning on the baronet, who was superintending Mary as she put the finishing stroke to a sketch of Roslin, which Henrietta had noticed in her portfolio, and expressed a wish to have hung up in her dressing-room.

Engaged in her occupation, the whispering of the two ladies was unattended to by the sweet girl: but the baronet, ever

ever alive to the influence of Mrs. Lessington over the mind of his heedless wife, lost not a word of what was said. Colouring with indignation, he made a step towards the speaker, and cast on her a furious look; but instantly checking the reproach which was rising to his lips, he resumed his station by the fair artist.

"*Let the galled jade wince,*" exclaimed the incorrigible lady with a sneer, and rose to take leave. Scarcely could politeness induce the baronet to conduct her to her carriage; but as he placed her in it, he said, in a stern and suppressed voice—"*Beware!*"

Mrs. Lessington saw indeed the necessity of being cautious, since one word from the object of her machinations could hurl her from even the equivocal rank in society which she continued to hold.

"Mary," said her ladyship, placing herself by her side, "I believe Mrs. Lessington

sington is right; you must have heard from a favoured lover."

"Have you no idea, Henrietta," she replied, "that the near prospect of beholding an old friend can light up the countenance with delight? If so, I shall be half tempted to withhold this letter, which I received to day in a packet from lady Frazer."

Seizing the prize, which Mary playfully held at a distance, her ladyship no sooner glanced her eye over the contents, than the same joyous expression which she had remarked in the face of her friend became diffused over her own features.

It was a letter from Mr. Murray. In it he apprised his niece, that being solicitor in a Scotch appeal to the House of Lords, she might expect very shortly to see him in London. Lady Beaumont's joy was unbounded: a vague feeling of uneasiness, which the inuendo of Mrs. Lessington had momentarily conveyed

veyed to her mind, was in a moment obliterated, while she anticipated, with all the vivacity of her nature, the meeting a relative she regarded with the same affection as her own parent.

When the baronet re-entered the room, she ran up to him with the open letter in her hand, and his pleasure fell little short of her own on making himself acquainted with its contents. He dreaded the effect which the sarcasms and insinuations of Mrs. Lessington might ultimately produce on the mind of Henrietta, and he rightly judged that the presence of her uncle would divert her thoughts to a new channel; and after his departure he meant to visit his estates in the country, and from thence proceed to Scotland.

At the termination of a week from the receipt of this letter, Mrs. Lessington gave a masked ball, the tickets for which had been previously issued. Sir Theodosius had many reasons which he

durst not openly avow for wishing that his lady should not be present, and he hoped her uncle might arrive in time to prevent her from attending it.

The important day, however, dawned without Mr. Murray making his appearance. The baronet hinted the probability of his arrival during the evening; but he found it unavailable to stay the steps of the giddy Henrietta, who anticipated much pleasure from the entertainment.

Mary had resisted the most earnest entreaties of the fair hostess to accept a ticket; but she had exerted her taste in the arrangement of lady Beaumont's dress, who had chosen to appear as the daughter of a Highland chieftain, equipped for the chace.

When she entered the drawing-room, arrayed in a tartan riding-habit, with a Highland bonnet on her head, surmounted by a plume of snow-white feathers waving carelessly over the left side of her

her face, her graceful and animated figure drew a compliment even from sir Theodosius, who was not in one of his most complaisant humours. In her hand she carried a bent bow, and at her back hung an elegant quiver filled with arrows. Her vest was fastened by a large amber brooch, and a small silver hunting-horn was pendent from her neck by a black ribbon.

Sir Theodosius had himself also assumed the garb of an Alpine hunter, that he might the better attend the steps of his wife.

The concourse of carriages which thronged the door of Mrs. Lessington prevented them from alighting for a considerable time, although, in consideration of lady Beaumont's impatience, sir Theodosius had left home at an unusually early hour.

When they at last gained an entrance, the rooms were so crowded with masks, that it was with some difficulty the ba-

ronet could conduct his fair companion to the upper end of the principal apartment, where, arrayed in the gorgeous habit of a sultana, stood the fair mistress of the mansion, in the act of receiving her visitors.

The noise, the lights, and the various grotesque figures which jostled her at every turn, made lady Beaumont cling to the arm of her husband; but after a while, recognizing several acquaintances under their feigned characters, she assumed her natural fearless levity, and mingled without dread among the motley crowd. She was successively accosted by various masks, but their witticisms in general turned on the peculiarities of her country, and were wholly without point or novelty. She was about to confess to sir Theodosius that the gratification she anticipated from the entertainment of the evening had wholly disappointed her expectations, when their notice was powerfully attracted by a group

a group of Savoyards, who sung some of their native airs in a style of simple and affecting pathos.

Rivetted to the spot, she did not observe the approach of a mask, habited as a Highland seer, till, touching her arm, he whispered—"*Beware of a false friend and a faithless husband!*" and quickly gliding among the crowd, disappeared from her sight.

In vain did her ladyship again turn her attention to the music; it now sounded like discord to her ear. Her reason told her that it was one of those unmeaning jests produced by the occasion; still her mind reverted to it with a kind of superstitious horror. Gladly, therefore, did she assent to the wish of a lady belonging to her party, she had joined on entering the apartment, to make the tour of the rooms, in the hope of diverting her mind from dwelling on the unpleasant warning: but

vain was every attempt to banish it from her thoughts.

In passing out of the principal saloon, the crowd was so great that their little party was separated. In vain did Henrietta turn her eyes in every direction; sir Theodosius no more appeared: but in a few minutes they were joined by a pilgrim, who was assiduous in his attentions towards her and her female friends. He led them to a recess in the apartment, and went in quest of refreshments. Returning towards the sofa where they sat, he observed the same Highland seer whose appearance had before so much disturbed lady Beaumont again approach her. Gliding softly behind his back, he heard him address her in an accent meant to be Scotch, but which was a wretched imitation of that language—"*Daughter of my native mountains,*" he said, "*why tarriest thou here, while the husband of thy*

thy bosom is in dalliance with the friend thou cherishest in thy dwelling?"

He might have continued to speak, for Henrietta was in no condition to interrupt his cruel purpose; but he fled with the quickness of lightning, while the poor victim of his diabolical arts could only stammer out a wish to return home.

The pilgrim, little less agitated than her ladyship, hurried out in search of the carriage. On his return, he found Henrietta had removed to an anti-room, where Mrs. Lessington was hanging over her with a hypocritical semblance of concern for her sudden indisposition.

Taking the arm of the fair sufferer, he led her to the carriage, and having placed her in it, sprang upon the box with the coachman, and directed him to drive to Berkley-square.

CHAPTER III.

"Twist ye, twine ye—even so,
Mingle shades of grief and woe,
Hope and fear, and peace and strife,
In the thread of human life."

In a state of mind bordering on distraction, the abused and credulous fair one reached her own mansion. She observed lights in a front drawing-room, and rushing hastily up stairs, threw open the door of the apartment, and was successively clasped to the bosom of her father and her uncle.

As soon as her agitation would permit her to listen to an explanation, Mary informed her that the two gentlemen had arrived about half an hour after her departure to Mrs. Lessington's, but that all her entreaties to be permitted to ap-

prise

prise her ladyship of the joyful news had been negatived by her uncle.

"And has sir Theodosius not been at home in the course of the evening?" questioned Henrietta, the warning of the seer rushing to her memory.

"What should lead you to suppose so?" inquired Mary, in reply, somewhat surprised at the manner in which the question was put. "I thought he purposed to be your protector through the evening?"

"But I was separated from him in the crowd," rejoined her ladyship, "and—But no matter, he will be here presently, I dare say," she added carelessly, and again placed herself betwixt her father and uncle.

At the termination of an hour, sir Theodosius entered the apartment. His manner was grave and dignified as he approached to welcome the father and uncle of his wife. Then turning to lady Beaumont, he said—"When you reluc-

tantly drew from me a consent to mingle in the motley groups this night assembled at Mrs. Lessington's, it was granted on the express condition that you should never quit my side. Yet no sooner was I unavoidably separated from you by the pressure of the crowd, than you imprudently left the spot where I had the only chance of finding you, and where you must have been assured I would seek you the moment I was able. The consequences of this heedlessness have been most unpleasant: you were so far made the dupe of a pretended seer as to betray doubts of the honour of your husband, and afterwards left the house under the protection of a pilgrim, with whose real character you were unacquainted. All this and more I learned as I traversed the rooms in search of you, in a state of anxiety bordering on distraction, exposed to the sneers of those who had so effectually played on your credulity for their own amusement.

Dear,

Dear, imprudent Henrietta," he continued, in a softened tone of voice, " tell me what punishment you deserve for all this?"

Gracefully bending one knee to the baronet, she held up her white hands in an attitude of supplication, saying— " Forgive me!" with an expression of countenance so truly comic, as at once disarmed sir Theodosius of his resentment, and raising the fair culprit, he strained her to his bosom with all the ardour of his first attachment.

Happy would it have been had Henrietta made Mary or her uncle acquainted with the purport of the seer's warning, since the sound mind and clear judgment of either of those attached friends would have at once applied an effectual remedy to the mischief; but, ashamed of her own credulity, the subject was reverted to no more.

Sir Theodosius was not himself perfectly sincere in the representation he

gave of the affair; for seeing the effect produced on Henrietta by the whisper of the pretended seer, he had hurried from the house, and at a masquerade warehouse exchanged his hunter's habit for the garb of a pilgrim, in which he could watch over the safety of his wife, and perhaps detect any farther machinations against her peace and his own.

Mrs. Lessington's depraved mind thought she could discern a more than common intimacy between sir Theodosius and his fair inmate; his sudden departure, therefore, from the rooms gave her hopes that he had returned home to solace himself in private with the company of Mary, since she could conceive no other motive powerful enough to induce this amiable girl to withstand her entreaties to be present at the evening's amusement.

Impressed with this belief, she planned with her worthless coadjutor, count Neurenburgh, the second warning, overheard

heard by sir Theodosius himself in his character of a pilgrim, and which terminated in a manner very different from that she had intended.

When Henrietta became the bride of sir Theodosius Beaumont, the baronet gave her father a solemn promise that she should spend the autumn of every year in Scotland; but Mr. Murray, unhappy since her departure, regarded the intervening period till he could again clasp his beloved girl in his paternal arms as an age. When, therefore, he heard of his brother's journey to the metropolis, he intimated to him the design of becoming his travelling companion, and surprising the young folks with a visit.

No circumstance could have imparted a livelier joy to the heart of his affectionate daughter, who returned the attachment he lavished on her with all the ardency of her nature.

Next morning, therefore, when Mrs. Lessington

Lessington called to exult over the mischief her contrivance, she doubted not, had produced, she was petrified with wonder and vexation to behold her predestinated victim, radiant in health and happiness, seated on a sofa between Mary and a stranger, with an arm carelessly thrown over the neck of each.

Springing up, she took the hand of the deceitful woman, and introduced her to her father, who, loving every being regarded by his daughter, received her with the utmost cordiality.

After passing half an hour in lively chit-chat, sir Theodosius entered, accompanied by the solicitor. A glance of disdain, which the former darted upon Mrs. Lessington, convinced that lady that her manœuvres were discovered by at least one of the parties; but, unabashed, she met the flash of his keen eye with a steady gaze.

"The ceremony of introduction having again taken place, the conversation became

became general. From the doating father of Henrietta little was to be dreaded, but the wily lady soon became convinced that great caution would be requisite to veil her purpose from the shrewd penetrating mind of the solicitor. Like an able general, she therefore resolved to withdraw for the present, and wait a more favourable opportunity for the furtherance of her diabolical purpose.

The late general Lessington had an aged sister who resided at Bath, and she announced her intention of setting off on a visit to that lady in a few days; but so completely had this artful woman entwined herself round the heart of the innocent Henrietta, that even when surrounded by affectionate relatives, she could not behold her departure without a pang of regret. Not so felt the other members of her family; sir Theodosius and Mary rejoiced in her absence, the former more especially, who was never easy in her presence, and whose dislike towards

towards her, since the masquerade, had augmented to utter abhorrence.

In the delights of friendship, in social converse, and in the moderate enjoyment of the elegant and refined pleasures which the capital affords, the next two months flew rapidly away. They were the happiest days which Mary had spent since she was banished from the abode of her youth.

With Mr. Murray she could converse of the friends absent and dear to her heart. While she joined him in lamenting the pertinacity with which sir Simon Frazer continued to neglect and contemn his inestimable wife, and to persecute his unoffending kinsman, her heart fluttered with joy as he described the daily improvement of William Frazer, or dwelt on the prospect of Bouverie's speedy return.

In proportion to the pleasure she derived from his society, was the painful feelings with which she heard the period fixed

fixed for the return of himself and his brother to Scotland. Yet one bright gleam was shed on her dreary prospects. In a few weeks sir Theodosius Beaumont and his family were to leave London for his estate in Gloucestershire, from whence they were to set out in August for the north, where the affectionate girl would once more be pressed to the heart of her kind friends and protectors of her youth. With this hope in view, she bade adieu to the worthy solicitor with more calmness than she had herself conceived possible.

Henrietta sunk into a kind of listless inactivity after the departure of her father and uncle. The efforts of Mary to amuse her not only failed to effect that purpose, but were received in a manner calculated to shew that they were disagreeable.

The high-minded girl would have been more hurt at this apparent diminution,

tion of her regard, had not the same fitful caprice marked her conduct towards sir Theodosius. Frequently would she receive from him the common offices of politeness with an air of haughty indifference, while at other times she would fix her eyes on his face with an expression of the most mournful tenderness, till her eyes filled with tears. The fact was, that the iron fangs of jealousy had stuck fast in her heart. The hints and insinuations of Mrs. Lessington, though at first little noticed, as well as the warning of the seer on the night of the masquerade, had made in the end so powerful an impression on her mind, that neither the honour of her husband's character, nor the tried virtue of her early friend, could wholly obliterate the painful doubts to which they gave rise.

Restless and unhappy, she watched every look, every word of the baronet with the most intense anxiety, drawing from

from his most simple actions food for the baneful passion that already consumed her.

Pained at this strange alteration in the manners of her friend, Mary grieved that she had not returned to Scotland under the escort of the worthy solicitor; but as the period of Henrietta's promised visit to the north was not far distant, she endeavoured to arm herself with patience to await its arrival.

In the mean time, lady Beaumont sought by incessant dissipation to banish from her memory the painful ideas which had robbed her of happiness. Balls, concerts, the opera, and even the gaming-table, occupied her evenings, while her mornings were either consumed in listening to the tonish loungers who crowded her breakfast-saloon, or in driving to the fashionable resorts of the idle and the dissipated.

The well-regulated mind of Mary turned with loathing from this mode of spending

spending her time, and she sought refuge in her own apartments from the folly by which she was surrounded.

Sometimes she indulged herself in a walk in Hyde Park, at an hour too early to fear interruption from the giddy throng who crowd its walks at a later period of the day. Attended one morning by Peter, she entered by Cumberland-Gate, and having dismissed the domestic, with orders to return in a couple of hours to the same spot, she slowly proceeded to the banks of the Serpentine River. Sauntering along its banks, musing on her own desolate state, and vainly endeavouring to account for the wayward conduct of lady Beaumont, time passed away unheeded till her name was uttered by some one near her. Looking up, she beheld with surprise count Neurenburgh, who immediately joined her.

The count was not a visitor in the house of sir Theodosius Beaumont, nevertheless she had been introduced to him

him at Mrs. Lessington's, and frequently met him at other fashionable parties. Returning his salutation, she immediately turned her steps homewards, aware that she had exceeded the appointed time, and that Peter would be in attendance at the gate.

The count proceeded by her side, pouring into her unwilling ear the most fulsome and unmeaning flattery, which no efforts of hers had the power to restrain.

Coming at length in sight of the gate, she gladly hailed Peter, in the hope of getting rid of her troublesome companion. But when she turned to take leave, the count presented to her a folded paper, with an air of great mystery, and without giving her time to speak, bowed and disappeared.

When Mary reached Berkley-square, she found sir Theodosius alone in the breakfast-room, lady Beaumont not yet having made her appearance below.

Rallying her on her taste for early walking,

walking, he entreated she would make tea; "for," added he, with a bitter smile, "I believe Henrietta is become too much a fine lady to attend to the vulgar business of eating and drinking."

"With the history of which of my numerous follies have you been entertaining your favourite this morning?" inquired her ladyship, in a sarcastic tone, at that moment entering the room.

"I have been complaining of your inattention to the vulgar business of eating and drinking, and of my favourite's propensity to early walking, by which I have been compelled to wait for my breakfast these two hours," he rejoined, in a tone so ludicrously mournful as effectually to beguile lady Beaumont of her ill-humour.

Breakfast was scarcely over before Mary hastened to her chamber, eager to peruse the contents of a paper so mysteriously delivered to her. But how great was her grief and indignation to find

find that it contained a declaration of the most unbounded adoration, with the offer of a handsome settlement, would she, regardless of the trammels of custom, become the companion of Neurenburgh on his return to the continent!

Bitterly did the amiable girl weep at the recollection of her friendless and unprotected state, which exposed her to an offer so humiliating; but after a while, drying her eyes and resuming the native dignity of her energetic mind, she sealed up the detested paper in a blank cover, and instantly dispatched Peter with it to the hotel where the count lodged.

This disagreeable duty performed, she busied herself in finishing the border of a white satin robe which she had been some time engaged in painting, from a pattern designed by herself, and which she intended as a birthday present to Henrietta, who came of age in the course of the following week. It was a wreath of moss rosebuds just bursting into flower,

flower, intermingled with full-blown heart's-ease, and headed by a border of laurel in elegant festoons. The first dinner-bell surprised her at her task, which hastily replacing in a wardrobe, she proceeded to make the usual alteration in her dress before descending to the dining-room.

On approaching the mirror with this view, Mary was startled at the change a few short hours had produced in her appearance, occasioned by the mortification and anger she had experienced from the audacity of count Neurenburgh.

"I am wrong," thought she, "to suffer the crimes or misconduct of others thus to affect me." Yet, should he persevere in his base designs, where could she look for protection? Not from sir Theodosius Beaumont, for her heart revolted at involving him in any thing unpleasant on her account; and the giddy, the capricious Henrietta, was still more unfitted for a confident. She had therefore only

only to trust to her own strong mind, and she trusted not in vain.

Hurrying over her toilet, she proceeded to the usual morning sitting-room, where she found Henrietta alone. —"What have you done with Beaumont?" she inquired, fixing her eyes on the face of her friend.

The oddity of the question, and the tone in which it was uttered, made our orphan stare, and she replied, gravely, —"I have not seen sir Theodosius since I left him with your ladyship, having been busy in my own chamber."

"In the library you mean," rejoined the jealous fair one; but ere the astonished Mary could inquire the meaning of this surmise, the voice of the baronet was heard on the stairs. He immediately entered the apartment, leading in a stranger, whom he introduced to the ladies as his sister.

In passing the door of the library in her descent from her own dressing-room,

lady Beaumont heard her husband in conversation with a female, whom her jealous terrors concluded to be Mary. Now convinced of her error, and ashamed of her petulance and the injustice she had done her friend, she pressed the hand of the amiable girl with renewed cordiality.

The presence of Miss Beaumont was a great relief to the harassed spirits of Mary. This lady was several years older than her brother. Her person was somewhat deformed; but her countenance was open and prepossessing, indicative of the habitual sweetness and hilarity of her temper. Her mind was not stored with a knowledge of literature and science; but she possessed a sound judgment and a penetrating understanding.

Mary had resolved to desist from her lonely rambles in the park, lest she might again encounter the dreaded and detested count Neurenburgh; but on the

subject

subject of her early walks being incidentally mentioned, Miss Beaumont indicated a desire to become her companion, which was joyfully acceded to by the poor forlorn orphan.

Accordingly, at an early hour the following morning, the two ladies proceeded on their excursion, attended by Peter, whom Mary, contrary to her usual custom, suffered to follow them the whole way. As they approached the river, Mary's quick eye caught a glance of Neurenburgh sauntering beneath a clump of trees; he approached, but on observing her so attended, passed on with no other notice than a bow, which Mary did not return.

"What a sinister countenance!" observed her companion: "is that gentleman a visitor at my brother's?"

"No," replied Mary, "though we frequently meet him in the circles of fashion; but I believe his countenance is no bad index of his depraved mind."

"Well, my dear, you are yet new to the world; but you will find that fashion and custom sanctify many errors which reason and morality condemn. You seem, however, to have sustained the ordeal of a London winter free from the contamination of the folly and absurdity which surrounded you; and this is the more surprising, since my youthful sister-in-law appears to require the whispers of sage experience even more than yourself. My brother was indeed a bold man to launch two such young and beautiful females into the whirlpool of fashion, with no other pilot but himself to guide you through the dangerous course."

"Sir Theodosius doubtless trusted to the unbounded attachment of his artless and warm-hearted wife," replied Mary; "and as for myself, recent and heavy affliction has deadened my mind to all the enjoyments of life, even to those most seducing at my early age."

A tear,

A tear, which made its way to the benevolent heart of her companion, fell at the retrospection of past sufferings.

Miss Beaumont took her hand.—"I have pained you, my young friend, but it was in ignorance," she said, in a voice of affection; "should you, however, at any time want a friend or adviser, you may command my willing services. Would to God my brother——But I am a fool——"

Mary returned the pressure of her hand with friendly warmth; she felt her mind relieved from a load of vague apprehensions in the presence of this amiable woman, which had threatened to crush her with their weight, and with renovated spirits she accompanied her back to the house.

Lady Beaumont was not yet visible; but Miss Beaumont observing to her brother that her walk had given her an appetite, requested he would order breakfast.

Before they had finished their meal, Henrietta appeared. Saluting her with great good-humour, her sister, pointing to the table, observed that she was afraid her ladyship would be incommoded by her country manners, since she could neither sleep nor eat according to the horologe of fashionable life.

"I have not myself so long resigned the character of a mountain nymph," said the votary of fashion, with a languid smile, "to be displeased with the exhibition of it in another; and perhaps," she added, with a sigh, "I had better still have been ranging wild on my native mountains, blessed with health and peace of mind."

"And what has deprived you of those inestimable blessings?" questioned sir Theodosius, in a tone of bitterness; "or what prevents you from resuming the salutary habits of your youth? To-day is Friday; on Wednesday we commence our journey to ———, and in one month from

from that time proceed for Scotland, where I trust you will recover that charming vivacity that first led me to bow a willing captive to your charms."

"What says Miss Ferguson to again rusticating among the Highland hills?" asked Miss Beaumont.

"My visit to lady Beaumont terminates on our reaching Edinburgh," replied Mary, in a firm tone; "my friends in that city are impatient at my long-protracted stay in the south."

An embarrassing silence continued for some time after this declaration. Henrietta's conscience whispered to her that her behaviour had been less kind and attentive to the deserted orphan than her virtues and misfortunes deserved, while her husband was vainly struggling to suppress feelings which honour and virtue alike condemned.

CHAPTER IV.

"What is true love? Oh, not the spoiler's art
Shall dare degrade the holy virtuous flame:
Love is the incense of a spotless heart;
Love wounds no confidence—he gives no smart."

MONDAY had been fixed on for a grand ball and supper, in celebration of the birthday of lady Beaumont. The most splendid preparations had been making for some time past to give eclat to the entertainment.

After breakfast, sir Theodosius, taking his hat, left the house, and the ladies retired to Henrietta's dressing-room to inspect a dress sent home for the occasion. It was like every thing else made under the direction of her ladyship, gaudy and fantastic in the extreme, being made of bright

bright purple satin, heavily ornamented with silver foil.

Having displayed it in every light for some time without receiving any compliments on her taste, she turned rather pettishly towards her companions to ask their opinion, when she observed that Mary had left the room.

"How insolent!" burst to her lips; but checking the expression she was about to utter, she inquired at Miss Beaumont what was her opinion of the dress? Ere this lady had time to reply, the sweet girl re-entered, carrying in her hand a parcel, which she opened, and displayed to view the satin robe of which the border had cost her so much labour.

The eyes of Henrietta sparkled with delight as Mary entreated her to accept this offering of friendship, to which she had dedicated some of her solitary hours.

The beauty of the pattern and the extreme delicacy of the execution filled

Miss Beaumont with astonishment; and she began to suspect that whatever indication of female elegance and taste were discernible in the mansion of her brother must have been borrowed from the accomplished orphan.

At dinner the master of the mansion appeared abstracted, and even gloomy. Neither the high spirits of his lady, nor the cheerful equanimity of her companions, seemed to possess the power of arousing him from his reverie; and he left the table and the house as soon as the ladies retired to the drawing-room.

Henrietta was too full of her splendid present, and in anticipating the effect it would produce on her assembled friends, to notice the sudden change in her husband's manners. But Miss Beaumont and Mary were more quick-sighted. The latter imputed it to disgust at the caprice lately displayed by his lady; while the former dreaded that it originated in a still more serious cause.

She

She had frequently with pain beheld his eyes turn from his flippant wife, to dwell with melancholy fondness on her fair companion; yet she entertained a higher opinion of her brother's rectitude of principle than to suppose that he would violate the sacred ties by which he was bound to the object of his first and voluntary choice.

The worth of the lovely girl was besides a sufficient security against such a laspe from virtue; nevertheless she feared that in the daily comparison forced on his mind between the amiable and dignified orphan, and his beautiful but capricious wife, his happiness would undergo a complete shipwreck.

The subject was however of so delicate a nature that she was forced to confine her surmises to her own bosom; but she determined to watch over her brother with a jealous eye; and should ought occur to confirm her suspicions, to lay aside all reserve, and endeavour to awak-

en him to a sense of honour and rectitude.

The bustle of preparation for the ensuing fête left, however, for a while little time for reflection; the affection of Henrietta for her early friend appeared to have completely revived; nothing could be resolved on without her concurrence and approval; and indeed her chaste and elegant taste was everywhere visible in the decorations of the different apartments.

For some time past Mary had shrunk with a kind of involuntary horror when left alone with sir Theodosius. His strange and inconsistent behaviour alarmed her delicacy, and she carefully avoided meeting him except in company. On the day previous to the fête, they were accidentally left alone in the saloon. Mary rose to retire, but the baronet interposed to prevent her retreat, and falling at her feet, besought her to listen to him only for a few minutes.—"Pity me, Miss

Miss Ferguson," he said with all the energy of passion; "think of the tortures I daily endure by seeing you only surrounded by spies. I adore you; the only happy moments I enjoy are those passed in your society."

Mary drew back with all the dignity of insulted virtue, while she surveyed him with mingled emotions of astonishment and horror.

"Look not on me thus, most adorable of your sex," he continued; "is it possible you could imagine I beheld you with indifference? No, you are dearer to me than life itself; and could you but conceive half the misery I have endured by concealing my love, my adoration, your gentle heart would surely pity me. Think what I have suffered on beholding you the object of universal admiration; oh, it was misery in the extreme! Were I but free to offer you my hand as well as my heart, with what joy would I offer them to your acceptance! Nay, frown

frown not, enchanting girl! prudence shall still conceal my wishes from all but thee."

"Good heavens!" said Mary, clasping her hands in agony; "surely my ears deceive me! can the man I looked upon as possessed of honour and generosity be so divested of virtue, so little master of his passions, as to be unfaithful to one of the most amiable of her sex, and aim at the ruin of an unprotected female, the early friend of his wife? Oh! ere it is too late, recal reason to your aid!"

The approach of some one forced sir Theodosius to start from his kneeling posture, and Mary embraced the opportunity of a servant entering the apartment to hurry out of the room.

She remained, during the rest of the evening, alone in her own chamber, under the plea of indisposition; but the anguish of her heart chased repose from her pillow, and she arose the following morning languid and unrefreshed.

Miss Beaumont entered her dressing-room at a pretty early hour to inquire how she had passed the night, and these two amiable women conversed together for an hour ere the much-abused Henrietta had left her couch.

Together they proceeded to the breakfast-saloon, to pay their compliments to lady Beaumont on the anniversary of her natal day. As Mary embraced her friend, a sickening sensation oppressed her for a moment, as the idea passed through her mind that she had proved the cause, however innocently, of estranging from her the affections of her husband. Instantly, however, resuming her accustomed calmness, she received the morning salutation of the baronet with a dignified self-possession, which should have taught him to despair of bending her to his guilty purpose.

Mary presided at the toilet of lady Beaumont: arrayed in the elegant gift of friendship, with no other ornament on her

her head but a sprig of myrtle tastefully interwoven amongst the profusion of her own silken tresses, she entered the principal saloon with eyes sparkling with animation, and her cheeks flushed with expected pleasure. Beautiful as a fabled houri, the chaste and simple style of her dress displayed her fine figure to the greatest advantage.

Sir Theodosius was alone, leaning, in a melancholy posture, on a superb marble chimneypiece, with his back towards the door; nor did he observe her entrance till, gently tapping him on the shoulder with her fan,—"What, sir knight of the woful countenance," she playfully said, "indulging your gloomy reveries in this temple of pleasure? What punishment ought the smiling goddess of this enchanted domain to inflict on her recreant knight, for thus doing homage to her rival, melancholy?"

Starting from his reverie, the baronet embraced his beauteous wife with a kind

of

of feverish rapture; and then complimenting her on the elegance of her dress, led her to a couch, and placed himself by her side.

The struggle between love and duty had been long and severe in the mind of sir Theodosius Beaumont, and it is more than probable that the latter would have finally triumphed, but for the capricious and childish folly of Henrietta herself.

Living in the constant contemplation of the numerous charms and virtues of the highly-gifted Mary, he at first began, almost unconsciously, to draw conclusions unfavourable to his giddy wife. These were daily strengthened by the rash petulance she had of late constantly displayed; and laying aside all restraint, his passion soon overleapt the boundaries of honour and discretion.

The cool contempt with which his declaration of unbounded love was received by the virtuous orphan, stung his proud soul to agony; but so far from inducing

ducing him to relinquish this guilty pursuit, it, on the contrary, only stimulated him to greater perseverance.

The appearance of his young and lovely wife, smiling upon him with love and confidence, shot a pang through his soul, and once more he resolved to live for her alone, when the door opened, and Mrs. Lessington made her appearance. Running up to the poor deceived victim of her machinations, she embraced her with all the appearance of the most unbounded friendship, declared that she looked divine, and told her that she had hurried to town on purpose to congratulate her on her birthday.—"I am about to rent a pleasant villa on the banks of the Thames, where you must come and rusticate with me for a few weeks," continued this wily serpent, "and then we will make a party to Brighton or somewhere for the next five months, since London is fast becoming a solitude."

"You

"You forget, my dear Lessington," said the credulous Henrietta, with something like a sigh, "that to-morrow we depart for Gloucestershire, and thence to Scotland for the remainder of the autumn, so that a long interval must elapse before we again enjoy the pleasure of each other's society. But why," she continued, after a pause, "as you talk of rusticating for a short time, cannot the term of your banishment from the metropolis be spent in ——. Do, my good Lessington, consent to relieve a dull family-party by your charming presence. Miss Beaumont is in town, but having some pecuniary concerns to settle, will not be able to join us in less than a month; therefore I can afford you a corner in the carriage."

With much affected hesitation, but real joy, this very best of friends accepted the invitation of the lovely being whose peace she meditated to destroy, and

and promised to be ready to set off by eleven o'clock the following morning.

The baronet remained a passive listener to this compact; a time was when he would have reprobated such a companion for the artless Henrietta; but indifference had succeeded to the fervour of passion, and instead of guarding her from the contamination of this unprincipled woman, he would rather have rejoiced to find in her errors an excuse for his own dereliction from rectitude.

Miss Beaumont and Mary now entered the room. Mrs. Lessington saluted the former with an ease and grace she well knew how to assume, while she held out her hand to the latter with the cordiality of an old acquaintance, telling her that she had agreed to become her travelling companion on the morrow. This intelligence, which would formerly have been regarded by this amiable girl with dismay, was now rather a source of consolation, since her presence,

presence, she conceived, would enable her more effectually to avoid meeting sir Theodosius alone. Miss Beaumont knew the character of Mrs. Lessington, and she severely blamed her brother for introducing her into his house; still, with her characteristic benevolence, she determined to expedite her business in London, and hurry down to Gloucestershire, in order to shield by her presence her giddy sister-in-law from the baneful arts of her visitor.

Mary declined joining the dancers, under the plea of indisposition, and seated herself with Miss Beaumont in a recess, where they were engaged in friendly chat, when the elegant form of Henrietta struck their eyes as she was flying through the dance.

Never had she appeared more lovely; the graceful fall of her white drapery, and the unadorned braids of her silken hair, displayed her face and form to the greatest advantage, while exercise had

heightened

heightened her complexion, and given animation to her fine dark eyes.

Mary heaved a sigh at the painful conviction, that neither the youth, beauty, nor amiable qualities possessed by her friend, could chain the fickle heart of her husband, and longed for the period which would enable her to fly the detested presence of this unprincipled man.

The supper-room was thrown open at a late, or rather an early hour in the morning, where a table presented itself loaded with all the delicacies of the season, and ornamented with various emblematical devices, in allusion to the happy occasion of the entertainment.

The youthful hostess presided with her usual ease and grace, and to a superficial eye might have been the happiest, as she was the gayest of human beings.

Mary, accustomed to control her feelings, assumed a cheerfulness foreign to her heart, and rejoiced when propriety

ety allowed her to retire to the privacy of her own chamber. Overcome with fatigue and mental anxiety, she threw herself on her bed, and soon sunk into a profound slumber, which lasted for several hours.

Starting up, she hastily dressed herself, and then sat down to finish a letter to Mrs. Frazer, detailing the insult she had received from the baronet, and entreating that she would devise some excuse for recalling her to Scotland immediately, as she wished not to create unpleasant suspicions in the mind of her friend, by hastily terminating a visit which she had promised to prolong till they should all set out together for the north in a very short time.

She had scarcely finished her epistle when a gentle tap at her door was followed by the entrance of Miss Beaumont. This lady observed traces of tears visible on the cheeks of the interesting girl, but too delicate to notice them,

them, or pry into the cause of her sorrows, she took her hand, saying—"Like myself, Miss Ferguson, I observe you dislike the constant bustle of fashionable society. It indeed destroys, in my opinion, all relish for social pleasure; and I am really at a loss to conceive whether complete solitude, or constantly making one in a crowd, where the heart can take no interest in individual excellence, is most calculated to render us selfish, and blunt the best affections of our nature. Be that, however, as it may, permit me to say that I highly disapprove of Mrs. Lessington's becoming an inmate in my brother's family; she is a dangerous companion for the young and thoughtless, and I grieve to think that she should have acquired so great an ascendancy over my sister-in-law. I shall not remain long behind, and should any circumstance occur to render the *sage advice of experience* desirable, you will always find in me a willing,

willing, and, I trust, a disinterested counsellor. Let no motives of false delicacy prevent you from opening your heart to me, who have both the will and the power to shield you from every harm, till you are once more under the protection of your friends. But I have agitated you," she continued, with a benevolent smile, "and shall say no more till we meet again."

Mary, affected even to tears, could only press the hand of this disinterested woman, and after a while they together descended to the breakfast-room.

CHAPTER V.

Her eyelid's black and silken fringe
Lay on her cheek of vermil tinge,
Like the first ebon cloud, that closes
Dark on evening's heaven of roses!
Her glances, though in slumber hid,
Seemed glowing through their ivory lid,
And o'er her lips reflecting dew
A soft and liquid lustre threw,
Such as, declining dim and faint,
The lamp of some beloved saint
Doth shed upon a flowery wreath,
Which pious hands have hung beneath.

MOORE.

ABOUT noon lady Beaumont and Mary commenced their journey in a new travelling chariot, accompanied by sir Theodosius and Mrs. Lessington on horseback. The baronet disliking, or pretending to dislike, a close carriage, proposed this arrangement, and challenged the

the ladies to take their turn as his companions.

After riding a few hours, Mrs. Lessington declaring herself fatigued, requested Mary to take her place, and alighting sprung into the carriage, which was no sooner in motion than her companion reverted to the subject of his odious passion. He vehemently declared that whatever might be his sufferings, he would carefully conceal the admiration with which she had inspired him from all eyes, but, especially from the knowledge of lady Beaumont; and that all the return he expected for this devotedness was a tender friendship.

It may be easily conceived how much the virtuous and high-minded orphan endured in being thus constrained to listen to such language; but restraining her tears by a violent effort, with dignified calmness, she replied—"When I became the visitor of lady Beaumont, I little suspected that her husband would

become my persecutor. You must be well aware, sir Theodosius, that while you acted with propriety you possessed my friendship and esteem; but now I must frankly confess my opinion of you is changed."

"Say not so, cruel girl," he replied; "love is an involuntary passion; grant me therefore your pity; say you do not hate me; is there not some merit in concealing my love, and studying the peace of lady Beaumont? restore me, I conjure you, at least restore me to that friendship I have forfeited."

"You must first," rejoined Mary, "summon honour and reason to your aid, in order to conquer your guilty passion. You must, as far as circumstances will admit, avoid my company, nor ever more insult me by a repetition of such conversation as you have this day indulged in; on these conditions, and on these only, my future friendship must depend."

"Hard

"Hard sentence! cruel girl! I will however strive to obey you, and cultivate your esteem; but say at least you pity the conflict I endure; say you do not rejoice in my misery."

"I wish you happy, sir Theodosius; it is in your own power to be so; and never more, I again entreat you, renew this odious subject."

"Ah, Mary! how can I submit to this harsh command? By participation my grief would be in some measure allayed; and to whom but yourself can I divulge my present unhappiness? Listen to me at least! It will be some alleviation to the affliction which consumes me."

To such flights as these was the indignant girl compelled to listen, until they reached the inn at which they stopped to dine. When they entered the parlour, Henrietta noticed the languid air and colourless cheeks of her friend, and inquired with an appearance

of more interest after her health than she had lately displayed towards her.

During the remainder of this disagreeable journey she was at intervals condemned to listen to sir Theodosius' assurance of the constancy of his detestable passion; and when at length they reached Beaumont Lodge, Mary, faint and ill, was forced to retire to bed.

"During the night her thoughts were wandering and unconnected, and it was not till towards morning that she sunk into a disturbed slumber. On rising next morning, her head ached so violently that it was impossible for her to appear below. When her friend heard of her indisposition, she flew to her apartment in the utmost anxiety, which was not lessened by the pale cheeks and heavy eyes of Mary.

Taking her burning hand, lady Beaumont proposed to send instantly for medical advice; but Mary so earnestly entreated her to desist, saying that she would

would be able to join the family at dinner, that she prevailed on her to give up the idea for the present.

Left once more alone, she began seriously to reflect on the conduct it behoved her to pursue in the painful predicament in which she stood. She grieved that she had not made Miss Beaumont the confidant of her brother's conduct, and arranged with her the best mode of putting an end to her visit, without giving rise to a suspicion of the truth in the mind of lady Beaumont. Now that she had left London, the difficulty of travelling to Scotland alone was augmented tenfold, nor could she devise a sufficient reason, the true one excepted, to urge to her friend, for so strange a proceeding. She determined therefore to arm herself with patience till the arrival of Miss Beaumont, or a letter from Mr. Frazer, and in the mean time sedulously to avoid the presence of the baronet.

Having once resolved on the proprie-

ty of this mode of conduct, the native dignity and firmness of her mind enabled her so far to overcome her feelings as to appear with her usual placid composure in the family circle.

The arrival of sir Theodosius Beaumont at the seat of his ancestors soon drew crowds of visitors, to congratulate him on his recent marriage; and had the mind of our orphan been at ease, the variety of characters with which she had now occasion to associate, so different from all she had ever before met with, would have afforded her much amusement. But melancholy and abstracted, she found a great effort necessary to preserve even an appearance of cheerfulness in the presence of her friend; and when alone, she was too prone to indulge in gloomy anticipation of the future, which gave a tinge of languor to her whole manners and appearance the very reverse of the open-hearted hilarity natural to her character.

A week

A week had passed away, and never, in the estimation of Mary, had Time before seemed to lag in his course, when a packet from Scotland was put into her hands, that for the time proved a sovereign balm to her wounded mind. It contained, along with testimonies of the continued friendship and affection of her beloved lady Frazer and the family of Bouverie, a letter from that highly-prized youth himself. After expressing his satisfaction at Mary having accompanied lady Beaumont to London, as the novelty of all around her would, he trusted, enlarge the sphere of her ideas, and assist in dispelling the gloom she would feel in his absence, he spoke of his probable stay in Jamaica not exceeding six months, and dwelt with rapture on his reunion with the dear companion of his infancy, the destined wife of his future days.

While Mary shed tears of delight over this tender memorial of pure attachment,

sir Theodosius Beaumont and his infamous proposals were alike forgotten. With the elastic step of happiness, she bounded after Henrietta, whom she observed crossing the lawn by herself.

Her engagement to Bouverie Frazer had never been communicated to her friend, who was of too volatile a disposition to sympathize in the profound and high-toned feelings which Mary cherished for her lover. Rejoicing, however, to see a smile reillume her wan cheek, lady Beaumont took her arm, and together they strolled towards a copse at the western extremity of the park, conversing on the land of their birth and the friends equally dear to each.

Just as they reached a mount which overlooked a meandering rivulet, sir Theodosius overtook them with a packet of papers in his hand; upon which Henrietta requested her friend to walk forward to a shady arbour at no great distance, and she would follow her, after having

having given an audience to her lord and master.

Mary sauntered forwards, and seating herself on a rustic bench, took Bouverie's letter from her pocket and began to reperuse it.

In a few minutes the rustling of the leaves behind her afforded, as she imagined, a warning of lady Beaumont's approach; scarcely had she time to replace the letter when her hand was seized by some one, and looking round with surprise, the hated form of count Neurenburgh met her eye. Thrown completely off her guard, she uttered an involuntary shriek, and would have fled had not the count detained her.

Falling at her feet, he swore he had been miserable since last they parted, entreated her pity, and in equivocal terms made a tender of his heart and fortune.

The shriek of surprise uttered by

Mary had alarmed the baronet and his lady. Sir Theodosius hastened to learn the cause, and arrived in view as the count ceased speaking. He approached, but started back with surprise on observing that it was Neurenburgh who had excited her terror.

The count, abashed at the sight of sir Theodosius, immediately let go the hand which he had detained a captive, when Mary springing up, sought protection by the side of the baronet. "Good heavens! Mary—Miss Ferguson, you look pale and terrified; compose yourself; in my presence no evil shall reach you. The intention which brought you hither, count Neurenburgh," said sir Theodosius, reddening with anger, "remains to be explained; but I must inform you, sir, that while Miss Ferguson is under my protection, no one shall insult her with impunity."

Terrified at the baronet's menaces, Mary

Mary conjured him to return with her to lady Beaumont, who must have been alarmed at the outcry she had made.

"I have no doubt," she added, "but count Neurenburgh is by this time fully sensible of the impropriety of his conduct, and will avoid a repetition of it;" and so saying she took the arm of the baronet and turned from the spot.

The count till now stood absorbed in profound meditation, as if endeavouring to frame some plausible excuse for his intrusion; but when he observed the baronet leading off his fair visitor, he said —"Hear me patiently, sir Theodosius; my utmost ambition is to call Miss Ferguson mine; let me entreat your consent to address her; plead for me; make any terms you please, only influence your charming ward to honour me with her hand."

Sir Theodosius stood for some moments in silent astonishment after the count ceased speaking; then turning to Mary,

Mary, he inquired what reply he was to make to the proposal.

With the calm dignity of offended virtue, the lovely orphan turned towards count Neurenburgh—"The humiliating insult you lately offered me," said she, "cannot easily be banished from my memory, and I must own creates doubts of the sincerity of your present proposals. Be that, however, as it may, I embrace this opportunity of solemnly assuring you, in the presence of my friend, that no consideration will ever induce me to unite my fate with that of a man who supposed me capable of sacrificing my honour at the shrine of unhallowed passion."

Sir Theodosius fixed a scrutinizing gaze on the countenance of Mary, for she had never mentioned, either to him or lady Beaumont, the insulting proposal of the count; but in her open brow he saw only contempt for the object before her, and again motioned to depart.

Count

Count Neurenburgh, eager not to lose his present advantage, fell at the feet of the justly-offended fair one, acknowledging that he was overpowered with shame at the recollection of his past conduct. He again entreated the baronet to intercede in his behalf, or he should be the most wretched of human beings.

Sir Theodosius briefly replied, that Miss Ferguson was entirely at her own disposal.

The count then urged the baronet so strenuously to grant him permission to call at the Lodge, if only as a friend, that, seemingly much against his inclination, he consented.

Mary, surprised and disquieted at this interview, remained silent. She read duplicity in the aspect of this audacious foreigner, and was fully convinced that his anxiety to gain admission into the baronet's family was only with the view of ensnaring her affections for the basest of purposes. Sick at heart, she

she begged sir Theodosius to return with her to the house, when, after a few more complimentary speeches, the count bowed and took his leave.

A faintness pervaded the frame of the agitated girl, which obliged her to lean on the baronet's arm for support, as they pursued their way towards the house. On approaching the lawn, they met several servants whom lady Beaumont, in her fright, had dispatched to their assistance. In the hall stood Henrietta herself, who immediately led the way to her dressing-room.

While Mary was struggling to gain composure, the baronet informed his lady of all that had passed, and continued —"Though I have always regarded Neurenburgh as a designing man, yet his honourable overtures, I thought, demanded at least a return of civility; but I am afraid the permission I gave him to call at Beaumont Lodge may be disagreeable to our young friend. At present,

sent, however, I observe Miss Ferguson's spirits are too much depressed to pursue the subject, so shall bid you both adieu."

The following morning count Neurenburgh presented himself at the Lodge at an early hour.

Lady Beaumont received him alone, and so effectually did the wily foreigner ingratiate himself into her good graces, that she gave him an invitation to stay dinner.

At table sir Theodosius looked grave, nay even displeased; but his volatile lady, flattered by the attentions of the count, and the compliments he paid to the elegance of her taste, was in high spirits.

Soon after dinner, he joined the ladies in the drawing-room, when, to the extreme mortification of Mary, lady Beaumont immediately left the apartment.

Throwing himself on his knees, he reiterated with the utmost vehemence the assurance

assurance of his unbounded love; but his dignified auditor soon put a stop to his rhodomontade, by gravely declaring it to be her fixed resolve to decline the honour of his hand.

The count started, changed colour, and was lost in a profound reverie; at length recovering the use of his speech, he assured her of his everlasting constancy, and declared it to be his determination to take advantage of a general invitation given him by lady Beaumont, and use his utmost efforts to render himself agreeable to the mistress of his affections.

Mary heard this affirmation in dignified silence, and was about to leave the room, when the entrance of sir Theodosius and the rest of his visitors put a stop to the loquacity of the count, and the evening passed more agreeably than could have been anticipated.

At an early hour the next day, Mrs. Lessington returned from a visit she had been

been paying in the neighbourhood. She expressed much surprise at seeing count Neurenburgh at Beaumont Lodge; yet Mary, who was in the saloon when she entered, fancied she could discern a glance of intelligence pass between them.

As soon after dinner as the ladies retired to the drawing-room, the proposals of the count, and Mary's refusal, were made the subject of conversation by the heedless Henrietta.

Mrs. Lessington rallied our orphan on what she termed the romance of her character; "or perhaps," she added, playfully patting her cheek, "you expect to have this beauteous brow of yours adorned with a ducal coronet?"

Sir Theodosius, in the mean time, looked ill and unhappy. Far from striving to conquer his passion, he cherished it as the greatest solace of his existence. He execrated the folly that had led him to wound the chaste ears of the object of his mad adoration by so

sudden

sudden a declaration of his love; and self-deceived, believed that could she be brought to pardon his presumption, and restore him to her wonted confidence and friendship, peace would again become the companion of his bosom.

Though silent on the subject of his odious passion, the pure mind of Mary shrunk from his presence, and except at meals, she now almost confined herself wholly to her own chamber.

Mrs. Lessington was too well acquainted with the human heart not to perceive, in spite of his utmost caution, that sir Theodosius was deeply smitten with the charms of the fair Caledonian, and she lost no opportunity of striving to awaken the dormant embers of jealousy in the bosom of his lady. The increasing coldness of Henrietta's behaviour towards herself convinced Mary that the diabolical insinuations of that dangerous woman had at last sunk deep into the heart of her friend, and she impatiently

patiently waited till either a letter from Mrs. Frazer, or the arrival of Miss Beaumont, should enable her to bid adieu to Beaumont Lodge.

In daily expectation of one or both of these events, and animated by the cheering hope of Bouverie's speedy return, she assumed a gaiety foreign to her heart, though her health suffered from the mortification she daily endured.

Being one day affected by a violent headach, she wandered out alone, in the hope that the air would afford her relief. Pursuing her way through a sequestered path that led to a woody dell, she entered a rustic arbour, several of which had been constructed on different parts of the grounds to afford shelter from the midday heats, and reclining on a moss-covered seat, she bared her burning temples to the evening breeze. Refreshed by the cool air, and soothed by the tranquillity and repose of the surrounding scene,

scene, her thoughts reverted to the happy days of her infancy, when, under the protection of her valued paternal friend, the sunshine of peace and joy illumined her days. The mournful change in her present prospects next rushed forcibly to her mind, and her tears fell unrestrained at the striking contrast. Relieved by this salutary burst of grief, she dwelt with revived hope on her future reunion with all she held dear, when her present sufferings would be forgotten, or only remembered as a painful dream.

In the midst of these bright visions of love and hope, time flew unheeded; the previous heat of the day had exhausted her enfeebled frame, and she sunk into an unconscious slumber. In dreams she revisited her native Scotland, and hand in hand, again wandered through the delightful shades of Glencross with her beloved Bouverie. A smile of joy and confidence

confidence played on her coral lips, as supinely she lay extended on her mossy couch.

At this moment Mrs. Lessington entered the covert: had her eye possessed the power of the basilisk, the unconscious object of her hatred would have been instantly sacrificed to her malignant glance; as it was, she silently retreated, and meeting sir Theodosius at the extremity of the path, playfully said—"If you wish to contemplate sleeping beauty, enter yon arbour," and hurried away.

The peaceful slumbers of Mary were quickly disturbed by a slight noise, and starting up, she beheld sir Theodosius kneeling by her side.—"How dare you thus intrude on my privacy?" said the indignant girl, rising to leave the bower, when the baronet, seizing her hand, obstructed her progress. At this unfortunate moment lady Beaumont, leaning on the arm of count Neurenburgh, and followed by Mrs. Lessington, turned an angle

angle in the glade, and entered the arbour.

The shock was too powerful for the weakened spirits of Mary, and bereft of speech, she sunk fainting on the seat from which she had risen. On recovering her consciousness, she perceived she was alone with the baronet, who was hanging over her with the utmost anxiety depicted on his countenance.—"Injured excellence!" he said, on perceiving she had recovered, "what can I plead in excuse for my imprudence? how solicit pardon for the pain I have occasioned you?"

"Barbarous man! leave me!" replied the injured girl; "what demon tempted you to invade my repose?"

"Mrs. Lessington was that demon; but let her beware; she is too much in my power to offend me with impunity. I fly to compel her to speak the truth, and vindicate your purity to the abused and credulous Henrietta."

So

So saying, he left the arbour, and Mary, after endeavouring to compose her agitated spirits, slowly returned to the house, and sought the solitude of her own apartment. Here she wept in bitterness of soul her hard lot; her mind was in a perfect chaos, nor could she, as yet, reflect coolly on the steps it behoved her to pursue. Impatiently had she waited for a letter from Mrs. Frazer, but weeks had passed over since it might have arrived, yet her maternal friend continued silent. Not doubting her attachment, Mary, amidst her own mortifications, was tormented with the dread that some evil had befallen her friends, since to some heavy domestic calamity alone could she attribute her seeming negligence.

Buried in these painful reveries, the suffering girl heeded not the lapse of time till the door of her dressing-room opened, and the baronet entered.

As she was about to reprove his intrusion,

trusion, he interrupted her by saying that he had been with lady Beaumont, and candidly declared to her the whole truth; "but her ladyship," he continued, "spurned me from her, and, instigated by that fiend in the human shape, the worthless Lessington, she even dared to call in question your angelic purity; we part, therefore, for ever."

The words of sir Theodosius struck like an icebolt to the soul of the suffering orphan, and her proud heart swelled almost to bursting, at the unjust surmises of one who had known her since their days of infancy.

Without uttering a word, she flew to the apartment of Henrietta, who, pale as the sheeted dead, lay extended on a couch, with no one near her but Le Noir. She detailed to her every circumstance as it had happened; related the intention she had formed of quitting Beaumont Lodge as soon as she had received a letter from Mrs. Frazer; and

conjured

conjured her by their early friendship, and the knowledge she had of her principles, to say if it were possible she could have become the guilty being she supposed.

"You act your part well," said Henrietta, sarcastically; "but I wish to be alone at present; doubtless sir Theodosius awaits your return."

Indignantly Mary arose—"I pity the misery you at present endure," she said, "but a time will come, when, the mist of prejudice being removed from your eyes, you will regret your present injustice. Be advised, Henrietta, by one sincerely interested in your happiness; no longer cherish the friendship of Mrs. Lessington; she is a viper who will in the end sting to death the bosom that has fostered her."

Disappointed in the hope of impressing conviction on the irritated mind of her friend, Mary again retired to the seclusion of her own dressing-room, there

to reflect on the best mode of proceeding to Scotland without delay.

As she dreaded, sir Theodosius was pacing the apartment with hasty strides. He stopped at her entrance, but the flushed cheek, and the indignant expression which marked her countenance, convinced him that Henrietta continued inflexible in her opinions. He would have taken her hand, but, with the calm dignity of injured innocence, she waved him from her, and requested he would withdraw. Reluctantly he prepared to comply with her request, at the same time entreating that she would favour him with half an hour's conversation in the morning. Mary bowed in silence to this petition, and her persecutor immediately retired.

Left once more alone, she revolved in her mind by what mode of conveyance it would be most prudent to proceed. Since the open rupture of the baronet with his lady, he seemed reckless of consequences,

consequences, and she dreaded that he would hang on her steps. She determined, therefore, to proceed to the nearest post-town, and take her place in the coach for Edinburgh, as being a safer and more unexceptionable conveyance than a postchaise, wholly unattended as she was.

With money she was amply supplied for the journey, since the packet put into her hands by Mr. Murray at parting with her in Edinburgh contained a draft on a banker in London for one hundred pounds, which, as well as the sum which the watchful care of Bouverie had left for her use, remained nearly untouched.

Having once determined on the line of conduct she meant to pursue, her mind became more tranquil; and though she grieved at having been the innocent cause of so much suffering to her friend, she could not wholly acquit Henrietta herself of having, by her capricious con-

duct, paved the way for the estrangement of her husband's affections.

Fatigued and exhausted as she was, she lost not a moment in making the necessary preparations for her journey, and having, by means of the faithful Susan, who, since her leaving Scotland, had been her more immediate attendant, secured a horse and one of the villagers to attend her to B—— by daylight the next morning, she threw herself on her bed to obtain, if possible, a short repose.

Susan was at her bedside before it was fully light, and having prevailed on her to partake of a slight breakfast, they proceeded, with noiseless steps, through the corridor, till they reached a door leading by a flight of marble steps to the shrubbery, from whence they easily gained the path to the village.

Taking an affectionate farewell of the sobbing girl, and placing in her hand a token of remembrance, Mary, mounted

on

on a pillion behind her rustic conductor, soon lost sight of Beaumont Lodge.

After an uncomfortable ride of nearly six miles, she reached B——, and immediately repaired to the inn from whence the northern coach set out; but, to her extreme mortification, she found it had departed nearly an hour before her arrival.

As there was no alternative, she was forced to remain till the following morning, and, being much fatigued, she retired to a bedchamber, and enjoyed several hours' sound sleep. She awoke much refreshed, and descended to a small parlour, where the cloth was laid for dinner. Having hurried over her solitary meal, she took out a volume of Shakespeare, with the view of diverting her mind from painful retrospections; but the attempt was fruitless, and, resting her arm on the table, she was soon buried in a profound reverie.

The shades of evening were beginning

to fall when the door of her little parlour opened, and count Neurenburgh entered. He fell at her feet, and, with insulting vivacity, repeated his infamous proposal that she would become the companion of his travels.

Great as was Mary's vexation at his appearance, she betrayed no outward signs of agitation, but, with a solemnity that awed even the libertine count, reiterated her unqualified rejection of his suit.

As he was about to reply, the well-known, and to Mary the dreaded voice of sir Theodosius Beaumont struck on her ear.—"You must answer to me, count Neurenburgh, for this intrusion," he said, in a tone of haughty menace, interposing between him and the fair object of their contention.

"When and where you please," was the laconic reply, as, coolly bowing to Mary, the count left the room.

Strongly was she tempted to call him back,

back, so odious to her had the baronet of late become; but checking the half-formed wish, she merely said—"Is this well done, sir Theodosius, to persecute one you have already so deeply injured?"

"My sweet love," he replied, attempting to seize her hand, "we are met to part no more; how could you so cruelly fly from one who adores you to madness? My hand, were it at liberty, you must well know, would be yours; let us leave this detested country; on the Continent you may pass for my wife, and when lady Beaumont dies, I swear——"

"Stop, monster," she exclaimed, "nor again wound my ears by such language, or you will force me to seek that protection which the laws of my country will unquestionably afford me."

A light step now approached, and as sir Theodosius turned to reprove the intruder—"Is it my brother who thus persecutes innocence?" was uttered in a

tone of the deepest sorrow by Miss Beaumont, who stood by his side.

Had the most hideous spectre met the eyes of the baronet, it could not have produced a more appalling effect than did the presence of his beloved and highly-venerated sister.

Several years older than himself, she had acted to him the part of a parent; and such was the influence she had acquired over his wayward passions, that she appeared to be the only being who could bend his stubborn will. Her unexpected appearance in the present case seemed to have aroused the latent sense of honour in his bosom, and, self-condemned, he hurried out of the room, and was leaving the house, when the valet of count Neurenburgh put a note into his hand that changed his determination.

CHAPTER VI.

O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade,
By the light quivering aspen made,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou. SCOTT.

MARY, who had hitherto comported herself with the greatest firmness, now, when the necessity for exertion ceased, sunk weeping into the arms of Miss Beaumont. Into her friendly bosom she poured the tale of her griefs; the conduct of her brother and count Neurenburgh, the jealousy of Henrietta, the silence of Mrs. Frazer, her engagement to Bouverie, and the mystery of her birth, were all revealed with unhesitating candour.

Her compassionate auditor listened with the deepest interest to her mournful history, and when it terminated, entreated her, with a benevolent smile, to compose her agitated spirits.—"Under my protection," she added, "you are safe from farther pursuit from my poor mistaken Beaumont, nor should I suppose count Neurenburgh would again attempt to intrude into your presence. The storm that has lately threatened your peace will, I trust, quickly disperse and be forgotten, or only remembered to enhance your future happiness, when restored to friends so justly dear to your heart. But as to travelling alone and unprotected, especially in the present state of your health and spirits, it is not to be thought of; to return to Beaumont Lodge, or remain in a public inn, would be equally exceptionable; the dearest friend fate has spared to me resides with a widowed mother a few miles from hence; to her cottage I will conduct

conduct you by to-morrow's dawn, where you will be cherished for my sake. Having seen you in a place of safety, my next care must be to conciliate the injured, but imprudent Henrietta. Of an unbending disposition, which was fostered by early indulgence, the acknowledgment of error is peculiary painful to the proud spirit of my brother; should lady Beaumont, therefore, continue to reject his offers of conciliation, a separation must be inevitable. Had she, on the contrary, given him credit for the sincerity with which he laid open to her view the wanderings of his wayward heart, she might have secured to herself a firmer hold on his affections than even when her youthful charms led him a willing captive to her feet. While, however, Mrs. Leasington continues her bosom friend and counsellor, I expect to find her deaf to the voice of reason and prudence. On the Continent, sir Theodosius first met this artful woman, and smitten

smitten by her beauty and fascinating manners, he became an attendant satellite on her splendid course. Whether the intercourse between them ever overstepped the boundary of virtue, I do not know; but when the news of my brother's marriage with a northern beauty reached her ears, frenzy took possession of her soul, and she swore, in the bitterness of her heart, to be revenged on him and his unoffending wife. How religiously she has kept her oath, you have unfortunately been but too well fated to know, though, I hope, no ultimate evil will ensue from her dark plottings. At present I must seek my erring brother, and trust, when I return, to find you more composed."

Mary raised her tearful eyes in gratitude to her considerate friend, who pressed her hand and glided out of the apartment.

At a late hour in the evening she reentered the room, followed by a waiter with

with tea. Traits of deep and powerful agitation were visible on her countenance, but the name of sir Theodosius no more passed her lips. She strove, on the contrary, to lead the mind of her young companion to other and far different subjects of contemplation. She spoke of the friends they were to visit, the beauty of their sequestered dwelling, and the pleasure Mary would experience from their society.

During the night the ladies shared the same chamber, and after an early breakfast, a chaise was ordered to convey them to Ivy Cottage.

As they were preparing to set out, sir Theodosius Beaumont's valet rushed into the room, with terror depicted in his countenance, exclaiming that his master was wounded.

Dreadfully alarmed, his sister rushed from the apartment, followed by the equally-terrified Mary. In the hall they met the object of their solicitude, apparently

rently lifeless, borne by two men, who placed their insensible burden on a sofa in an adjoining parlour. A surgeon, who had been hastily summoned, soon after arrived, and having examined the patient, declared his wound not to be mortal, but that he had merely fainted through loss of blood.

Miss Beaumont, who, with her usual consideration, had after the first alarm requested the poor distressed girl to retire, now hastened to relieve her worst fears by assurances of the baronet's safety. She then wrote a few hasty lines of introduction to her friends at the Cottage, and entreated Mary to proceed with the chaise, as her remaining under the same roof with her wounded brother would, under every circumstance of the case, be highly improper.

Miss Beaumont's next care was to send off an express to the Lodge, lest an exaggerated account of the disaster might reach the ears of lady Beaumont; but

but long ere she could expect the return of her messenger, her ladyship rushed into the little parlour of the inn where her sister-in-law was seated.

The account of the baronet's danger revived all her tenderness; his harshness, his neglect, his infidelity, all were forgotten; the image of her beloved Beaumont, wounded and dying alone, took possession of her mind, and the instant horses could be put to the carriage, she set off for B——, without even a thought of Mrs. Lessington, who happened to be in the grounds when the express arrived.

With the greatest tenderness Miss Beaumont soothed the distraction of Henrietta, who blamed her own thoughtless levity and subsequent harshness for all the evils that had happened.—"With my own hands," she said, "I presented a picture of perfection to the view of my husband, and heightened the contrast between Mary and myself by my own capricious

capricious folly. Instead of imitating the virtues I saw him admire, I extinguished every remaining spark of affection towards myself in his bosom by my ill-concealed jealousy; while I drove from my heart and my home the angelic being who, in spite of my injustice, was labouring to secure my peace, by shielding from my knowledge the dereliction of my husband. Never can Beaumont forgive me; never can I forgive myself!" Tears streamed from the eyes of Henrietta as, resting her burning forehead on her hand, she remained the mute image of despair.

Miss Beaumont endeavoured not to check this salutary relief to her overburdened heart; but seating herself by her side, she watched the moments of returning composure to whisper hope and consolation in her afflicted bosom.

The ball had been readily extracted by a skilful surgeon, who expressed no fears for the safety of his patient, except what

what might be apprehended from the weakness consequent on the profuse loss of blood. Enjoining the strictest quiet, he took his departure, and when lady Beaumont arrived, the invalid had sunk into a profound slumber.

Tranquillized in some measure by the soothings of her sister, she waited with tolerable composure till the baronet awoke, which was not till after the lapse of several hours. She would then have immediately flown to his chamber, but was gently withheld by the more considerate Miss Beaumont, who represented to her that the least agitation might be fatal to the patient in his present exhausted state, and promised gradually to prepare her brother for the interview.

Henrietta followed on tiptoe to the sick chamber, and seating herself in a small antiroom, listened, with the most intense anxiety; to what passed within.

With joy almost unbounded, she heard him declare that he was much refreshed

freshed by his long sleep, and thank his sister in terms of the most animated gratitude for her affectionate attentions.—"I have one more painful task to impose upon you, my dear sister," he continued; "hasten to my poor abused Henrietta; no one knows better than yourself to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded mind. Perhaps my contrition, my sufferings, may have softened her just resentment towards me; perhaps——"

This was too much for the resolution of Henrietta, who, unmindful of consequences, rushed into the room, and falling on her knees by the couch of her husband, bathed his pale face with her tears.

Miss Beaumont glided gently from the room, and on her return, at the end of half an hour, had the satisfaction to observe that the reconciliation was complete.

Henrietta now established herself at the

the bedside of the patient; with the most tender and assiduous care, she administered to his wants, and beguiled the tedious hours of confinement by all those little delicate attentions which the female mind knows so well how to employ. From this period indeed her character seemed completely changed; the virtues of her mind, which had been hitherto obscured by traits of levity and caprice, now shone forth in all their native lustre. Her illiberal and unfeeling behaviour towards the friend of her youth arose to her mind, and checked her present happiness. She longed to know whether Mary had actually departed for Scotland; but it was too delicate a subject to meet the ear of her husband. Embracing the opportunity while he slept, she communicated to Miss Beaumont the anxiety she felt to learn the fate of her injured friend, and was delighted to learn that she was safe under the protection of Mrs. and Miss Mountford.

Mountford. She declared her intention of flying to propitiate her wounded feelings the moment Beaumont's convalescence was ascertained, and in the meantime entreated Miss Beaumont to become her intercessor with the gentle Mary.

Miss Beaumont readily undertook the pleasing task, as she intended, should her brother continue in the same favourable state, the following morning, to drive out to Ivy Cottage.

Henrietta had scarcely resumed her station by the pillow of the baronet before Mrs. Lessington arrived at the inn. She was surprised, and by no means pleased, at Miss Beaumont's presence; but, disguising her chagrin, she lamented the painful situation in which her dear friend was placed, and entreated to be led to her presence.

"As my sister never leaves the bedside of the patient, and the strictest quiet is enjoined by the surgeon, I know not

not how to comply with your request. I shall, however, inform Henrietta of your wish."

The nurse entering at this moment, Miss Beaumont requested she would apprise lady Beaumont of Mrs. Lessington being in the house. Her ladyship turned pale, and shuddered at the mention of her name; but turning to her husband, with one of her most bewitching smiles—"Tell me, Beaumont," she said, "how I am to get rid of this bad woman, whom I had the folly to term my friend; but for her pernicious counsel, I had never lost the heart of my husband—never wounded the gentle bosom of my truest and best friend."

"Hush, my sweet love," replied the baronet; "if you wish to punish this female fiend, admit her for an instant to witness our present felicity."

Henrietta shuddered at the bare idea of meeting one to whose evil agency was owing all her past sufferings; but the

the idea of performing an act of justice towards her husband and her friend, by an open recantation of her errors, reconciled her to the suggestion; and a message to that purpose was accordingly sent to the parlour.

Miss Beaumont sighed as she rose to accompany Mrs. Lessington to the sick chamber.—"Alas!" thought she, "how evanescent have been my poor sister's resolutions to shun this her worst enemy, when, on her very first appearance, she again forgets her husband's wishes, nay almost commands, that she would relinquish her intimacy!"

An exulting smile played on the features of this malignant woman as she thought of the additional pangs it might yet be in her power to inflict on the objects of her hatred; but when she beheld Henrietta supporting the half-recumbent form of her husband, whose eyes were turned upon his lovely wife, beaming with love and gratitude, the withering sight

sight filled her dark soul with projects of the most dire revenge. She smoothed her brow, however, and in honeyed accents congratulated the baronet on his fortunate escape.

"Fortunate, indeed!" exclaimed lady Beaumont, with enthusiasm, turning her full dark eyes on the face of Mrs. Lessington; "for nearly had his precious life fallen a sacrifice to his imprudent *contemplation of sleeping beauty*, and the weak credulity of his imprudent wife. But, as the poet says—'Misfortunes are sometimes blessings in disguise,' so I trust my past mistakes will render me wiser and happier for the future."

Even the audacious Mrs. Lessington shrunk under the speaking glance of the lovely enthusiast, and pretending to be afraid of fatiguing the patient, immediately left the apartment with Miss Beaumont, who accompanied her to the

Lodge to send some necessary articles to the inn.

The warm pressure of her hand by the grateful Beaumont fully compensated Henrietta for the exertion she had made; and in a few minutes she had the satisfaction of beholding him sink into a calm slumber.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

"The heart may languish, and the eye may weep,
For those whom Heaven has called from life and care;
Yet there's an earthly pang, than these more deep,
Which sharpens sorrow, and which brings despair;
Which wrings the heart, and lays the bosom bare:
Yet 'tis not death—each living man must die.
Death culls the sweetest flower, the form most fair—
The one deep cloud which darkens every sky
Is chang'd affection's cold averted eye."

In the meantime, Mary had arrived in safety at Ivy Cottage, and, for Miss Beaumont's sake, was welcomed by its hospitable owners with the frank cordiality of an old acquaintance. They regretted the unhappy occurrence which had detained their friend at the inn, but trusted it would not ultimately deprive them of her promised visit.

Through the day, Mary vainly endea-

voured to shake off the lassitude which oppressed her, and when retired for the night, she failed to enjoy that repose of which her harassed frame stood so much in need. Languid and unrefreshed, she joined the family at breakfast, and before the meal was finished, Miss Beaumont drove up to the door.

Her smiling countenance imparted a ray of joy to the harassed orphan, ere her lips had time to utter the delightful assurance that all danger was past, and that a complete reconciliation had taken place between Henrietta and her erring husband.

A weight seemed removed from the oppressed heart of Mary at this blissful news; yet when her first feelings of satisfaction began to subside, her own peculiar woes pressed with renewed force on her careworn spirits. A month had now elapsed since an answer might have arrived from Mrs. Frazer to her urgent request to be recalled to Scotland, yet she

she preserved an invincible silence. Had any misfortune occurred in her circle of friends, the kind, the considerate Mr. Murray would have apprised her of it. For the first time, the maddening idea found entrance into her mind, that her conduct had been unfavourably judged by that high-minded matron, and it brought in its train a dreary perspective of future misery.

With a spirit firm and unbending as her own, Mary once more addressed the venerated parent of her beloved Bouverie. She recapitulated the purport of her former letter, entered into a detail of subsequent events, and concluded by informing her that she was now safe under the protection of a friend of Miss Beaumont's.

Having finished her communication, she requested the baronet's valet, who had attended Miss Beaumont to the Cottage, to put it into the post-office on his return to B——, and then joined Mrs.

Mountford in the parlour to wait the return of the two friends, who had walked out when Mary retired to write her letter.

In a short time after their return to the house, Miss Beaumont took her departure, promising to repeat her visit whenever she could be spared from the inn.

Daily letters from this considerate friend informed Mary of the progressive convalescence of the invalid; and at the end of a week she learned, with much satisfaction, that the baronet was not only able to quit his couch, but that it was deemed safe to convey him to the Lodge in an easy carriage.

Mrs. Lessington departed for London on the day following her interview with Henrietta at the inn, and the increasing harmony between lady Beaumont and her husband gave a fair promise of their permanent felicity.

The storm that had threatened to wreck

wreck the peace of her friend had now happily blown over, but Mary felt only more forcibly her own friendless and desolate state.

She was at first regarded by the amiable inhabitants of Ivy Cottage as the friend of Miss Beaumont, but became daily more and more endeared to them for her own sake.

Miss Mountford, mourning an early and severe disappointment of the heart, well knew how to sympathize with her afflicted guest. She did not intrude upon her the consolation of words, but endeavoured, by every means in her power, to divert the sufferer from brooding over her sorrows.

Before leaving B——, the repentant Henrietta visited the Cottage, and received the forgiveness of her injured friend for her cruel and unjust suspicions; but neither her tears nor entreaties could prevail on the high-minded orphan

again to become the inmate of sir Theodosius Beaumont's house.

Miss Beaumont, in her own mind, applauded the delicate firmness of Mary, though she did not interfere in the friendly contention. The family were about to set off for London for the benefit of a medical consultation, as the convalescence of the baronet appeared stationary. The friends, therefore, took an affectionate leave of each other; and in a few days sir Theodosius Beaumont, accompanied by his lady and sister, proceeded to the metropolis.

On the eighth day after their departure, Mary received a packet from lady Beaumont, and on tearing open the envelop, a letter, addressed in the well-known hand of Mrs. Frazer, met her eye.

Eagerly she perused its contents; they proved a deathblow to all her hopes of happiness. Of her first communication,

munication, Mrs. Frazer took not the slightest notice, but proceeded to say that prudence ought to have dictated to her to leave the house of the baronet the moment his designs were rendered manifest, since her own fame, and the happiness of the youth to whom she was solemnly betrothed, were unquestionably of more consequence to her than the peace of lady Beaumont.

Conscious integrity was, however, a shield that would enable her, she trusted, to bear up against the heavy weight of suspicion that threatened to overwhelm her. She congratulated her on having secured a safe and honourable asylum, which she hoped no future imprudence would deprive her of, and enclosed a bank-bill for twenty pounds to answer present expences, till some arrangement could be made for a more permanent provision.

Mary read this unfeeling epistle with

a dry eye. The stroke that had deprived her of every hope seemed to have taken from her the power of feeling the full weight of the blow. The only distinct perception she had was a desire to owe no pecuniary obligations to one who could so cruelly insult her misfortunes, and without a moment's consideration she enclosed the bill in a blank cover, and by the return of post retransmitted it to Edinburgh.

Like a withered branch lopped off from the parent stem, Mary was now without home, property, or friends; yet the fearless buoyancy of conscious innocence and wounded pride supported her under the dreadful trial.

In confidence, and under the seal of the strictest secrecy, she communicated to Miss Beaumont her blighted prospects, and the determination she had formed to depend in future on her own exertions, rather than owe the slightest

favour

favour to the proud family who had so unfeelingly deserted her in the hour of her heaviest affliction.

Though Miss Beaumont grieved that one so highly gifted should be forced, and that by the turpitude of her only brother, to seek an asylum amongst strangers, she nevertheless approved of her virtuous design, and determined that no effort on her part should be wanting to procure safe and honourable protection for this persecuted orphan.

Happy would she have been to have secured to herself so valuable a companion, but the medical gentlemen of the first eminence who had been consulted in the case of her brother, unanimously gave it as their opinion that nothing but passing the winter in a milder climate had the least chance of restoring his health. In a fortnight, therefore, the baronet and his lady were to sail for Madeira, whither she had herself promised to accompany them.

While hesitating how best to forward the wishes of her young friend, she chanced to meet at her milliner's with a very intimate friend of her mother's. The honourable Mrs. St. John was accompanied by a niece, who having been left an orphan while yet at school, had been, when at a proper age, received as an inmate into the house of her affectionate aunt.

Mrs. St. John resided chiefly at an elegant villa which she possessed on the banks of the Thames; and as neither her health nor her age allowed her to keep much company, she was anxious to engage a youthful companion to enliven the solitude to which her niece was necessarily condemned. Mentioning her intention to Miss Beaumont, this lady immediately related as much of Mary's history as she deemed sufficient to interest her auditors in the fate of the sweet girl; and before they parted, it was agreed that she should conduct Mary to

to Richmond before her departure from England.

Ere she left the milliner's, Miss Beaumont secured an apartment for the reception of Miss Ferguson; and by the evening post wrote to her young friend to set out for London as soon as possible after the receipt of her letter.

Mary lost no time in obeying her injunctions. Mournful indeed was the parting betwixt her and the amiable inhabitants of Ivy Cottage, whose tender sympathy had been to her withered heart like the refreshing dew to the parched and drooping flower.

Without any accident she arrived in Bond-street, and in a few hours afterwards was pressed to the sympathizing bosom of her only remaining friend.

After a few days given to the necessary preparations for entering Mrs. St. John's family, Mary was conducted by Miss Beaumont to the splendid mansion of her new protectress.

With

With that innate delicacy which formed a characteristic trait in Mrs. St. John's mind, she avoided all mention of pecuniary arrangements; and Mary merely stipulated to be permitted to remain in her own chamber on those occasions when company were present.

After partaking of an early dinner, Miss Beaumont took an affectionate leave of her young friend. The fortitude which had supported Mary through the late trying scenes in which she had been an actor entirely forsook her, as a turning in the avenue hid from her sight the carriage which contained the only being who now seemed interested in her fate. Alone and desolate, she stood like a blasted tree in the midst of a dreary desert, exposed to every passing blast. Abandoned in infancy by her parents, misjudged in riper years by those friends whom fate had raised up to supply the place of her natural protectors, separated from the exalted being

ing to whom she had yielded up her youthful affections, the future appeared to her a cheerless blank.

Still the cozener Hope would at times whisper to her heart that Bouverie would judge her less severely than his mother had done; but again the fervour, nay almost the adoration, with which he regarded that mother, interposed to obscure this fair vision of her fancy, and again plunged her into the depths of despair.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

"What though thy heaven be overcast,
The dread appearance may not last—
Expect a brighter sky."

MARY was suffered by her considerate patroness to pass the rest of the day in the seclusion of her own chamber, and before the following morning, had reasoned herself into such a degree of composure, as to join the ladies at breakfast without betraying any signs of her recent sorrow and agitation.

Daily did the sweet girl gain in the good opinion and friendship of Mrs. St. John and her lively niece, who declared she was much more reconciled since her arrival than she had before been to the retired life led by her aunt.

Reading,

Reading, drawing, and the lighter kinds of needlework, employed their morning hours; before dinner the young ladies usually rode out on horseback, and the evenings were diversified by music, conversation, &c.

Thus passed the winter months in the elegant mansion of Mrs. St. John, and Mary might have been happy in the increasing kindness and consideration she experienced, had not the tormenting thought, that she was cut off from all she loved, continually intruded to disturb her peace.

With feverish eagerness she scanned every newspaper, in the hope of seeing the arrival of the Jamaica fleet; yet should Bouverie even be a passenger, of what avail would it be to her? In the pride of wounded feeling, she had cut off all clue to her present residence, and she almost blamed herself for the haste with which she had sealed her own doom. Still, when she thought of the influence which

which his proud mother possessed over the mind of her son, she again became reconciled to the step.

The silence of lady Frazer, of William, and even of the friendly solicitor, convinced her that she had been condemned and cast off unheard, and she determined to leave it to time and circumstances to convince them of their error.

Mistaken Mary! little wert thou aware that at the moment thou wert accusing thy friends of injustice and neglect, those very friends were mourning your loss in bitterness of soul; while your faithful Bouverie lay stretched on a bed of sickness, brought on by your supposed perfidy.

Mrs. Frazer felt the delicacy of Mary's situation on receiving the letter in which she detailed the conduct of sir Theodosius Beaumont, and lost not a moment in recalling her to Edinburgh, under the plea of captain Frazer's indisposition, and his earnest desire to see her immediately.

diately. She enclosed a draft for twenty pounds, told her to solicit Henrietta to suffer a confidential domestic to accompany her to London, and see her properly accommodated in the mail.

Anxiously did Mrs. Frazer and her other friends wait for the arrival of their favourite, but day after day elapsed to bring only disappointment, when a letter to Mr. Murray from Henrietta, written in all the frenzy of passion, detailed the infidelity of her husband and the perfidy of her friend.

Much did Mrs. Frazer grieve that her letter had been too late to prevent the exposure of the baronet's unworthy designs to his lady; but of the virtue of Mary not a shadow of doubt ever entered her mind. The reproaches of lady Beaumont she imputed to jealousy, and longed to sooth the poor victim of injustice and intrigue in her maternal arms. Just, however, as her anxiety had reached such a pitch as to induce her to take

a journey

a journey to Gloucestershire, however inconvenient and expensive it might be, the public papers gave an account of the duel, with this addition, that the fair Caledonian who occasioned the dispute had left England with the foreign count.

The next post brought a letter from lady Beaumont herself, giving a detail of the unfortunate affair, mentioning her reconciliation with her wounded husband, and entreating her uncle never more to allude to the painful subject.

The suspicions of Mary's friends were somewhat aroused by this letter and the newspaper account; but still they resisted every injurious thought, till her own draft enclosed in a blank cover reached the hand of Mrs. Frazer, and put beyond a doubt the turpitude of the unfortunate orphan.

Mrs. Lessington had contrived, through the agency of Le Noir, who was recommended by her to the unsuspicious lady Beaumont

Beaumont on her first arrival in town, to possess herself of Mrs. Frazer's first letter, which circumstance occasioned all the subsequent misfortunes of poor Mary.

The valet of sir Theodosius was the professed lover of Le Noir, who, certain of a rich reward, prevailed on him to give up to her also the explanatory communication addressed by Mary to her friends, and entrusted to his care by Miss Ferguson at Ivy Cottage. This was beyond even the utmost expectations of the worthless Lessington, and enabled her to gratify her unbounded malice against the innocent girl, whom she detested for her virtues, and for the sway which her beauty and accomplishments had gained over the heart of sir Theodosius. To this end she fabricated an answer to this letter, couched, as has been seen, in terms of unfeeling reproach and ill-disguised suspicion; and enclosing in it the draft, which had been transmitted for

for a very different purpose, in due time forwarded them to Ivy Cottage.

Mrs. Frazer's hand was so exactly imitated, that the unsuspecting orphan fell into the snare thus artfully spread for her destruction; and by returning the draft without farther explanation, confirmed the unfavourable opinion her friends began to entertain of her conduct.

But however strong appearances might be against her, nothing could shake the reliance Mr. Murray placed on her virtue. He therefore resolved to undertake a journey to London, with the twofold view of ascertaining the real domestic situation of his niece, and, if possible, discovering the retreat of his young favourite, and again restoring her to that place in the estimation of her friends which he felt assured she ought never to have lost.

Unfortunately he did not reach the mansion of the baronet until three days after

after he and his family had embarked for Madeira. From the old faithful butler he heard only a confirmation of the story with which he was before acquainted, and for farther particulars was referred to Mrs. Lessington, who, Wilson informed him, was on a visit to his lady at the time the duel occurred.

Mr. Murray had conceived an unfavourable opinion of Mrs. Lessington when he was formerly on a visit to his niece; but being unacquainted with any cause of enmity she could entertain against the unoffending Henrietta, he proceeded without delay to her house.

She was alone on his entrance, and, in spite of her high-bred assurance, could not conceal a considerable degree of agitation, as, fixing his penetrating eyes on her face, he entreated her to inform him if she knew ought of Miss Ferguson's retreat?

Relieved by this question, which proclaimed her visitor ignorant of the part she

she had taken in the late unpleasant affair, Mrs. Lessington entered, with much seeming feeling and delicacy, into a narration of the circumstances which preceded and followed the duel which so nearly proved fatal to the baronet. She dwelt on the scene in the arbour, and on Mary's subsequent elopement with count Neurenburgh, which so irritated sir Theodosius, that he pursued, and came up with them at an inn at B——. Here the encounter took place, which, proving favourable to the count, he carried off the fickle fair one to the Continent, while the poor wounded baronet was left to the care and compassion of his abused but angelic wife.

There was such a mixture of truth and falsehood in this account, that an auditor less shrewd would have given to it implicit credence; but on Mr. Murray's mind it produced a very contrary effect. He felt convinced that the heart formed by his late worthy friend could

not

not at once become the seat of vice. He conjectured that wounded delicacy and mortified pride had induced the suffering girl to seclude herself for a while, but he trusted that time and reflection would convince her, that, in so doing, she was unjust to herself and cruel to her friends.

Having exhausted every source of inquiry without effect, Mr. Murray again turned his steps towards Scotland, by no means satisfied with the accounts he had received. On arriving in Edinburgh, the hope he had entertained that Mary might either have written, or perhaps even reached that city during his absence, was fated to meet with a disappointment, and he trembled lest force or art had been employed to sever the lovely orphan from her friends and country, well assured that voluntarily she never would abandon them to share the fortunes of a dissolute foreigner.

Painful as he felt the task, under all

the circumstances of the case, his anxiety for the fate of his young favourite was so great, that he determined to write to sir Theodosius Beaumont, and conjure him candidly to disclose all that he knew of the ill-fated girl. Still months must pass away before a reply could be expected from Madeira.

Lady Frazer's health and spirits had gradually declined since the tyranny of her husband deprived her of her favourite companion, and the knowledge of the persecution and indignities to which Mary must have been subject, ere she resolved to secrete herself from the knowledge of all she held dear, filled her mind with vague apprehensions.

This interesting orphan was a sacred deposit committed to her charge by a dying brother, and she blamed herself for having been so easily intimidated to resign her. William, her darling William, it is true, uttered no word of reproach; but his ardent mind conceived

all

all that Bouverie would feel in having the object of his youthful adoration so mysteriously torn from him, and he blushed to think he should so ill have fulfilled the promise he made to his friend at parting, of watching over the safety of his darling Mary.

Captain Frazer's feelings would instantly have prompted him to demand satisfaction for the insult offered to her who was as dear to him as if she had been already his daughter; but with a debilitated frame and contracted means, he found it impossible to cross the sea, or traverse the Continent, in search of one or both of her persecutors. Like a lion struggling in the toils of a cruel hunter, the gallant veteran was therefore compelled to remain inactive, though none of Mary's friends suffered more than himself on the painful occasion.

Mrs. Frazer endeavoured to inspire, with hopes she durst scarcely entertain herself, the mind of the two invalids; but

week after week passed on without bringing the intelligence so anxiously looked for, till hope began to be swallowed up in despondency.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.

Not e'en the soldiers' fury rais'd in war,
The rage of tyrants, when defiance stings 'em,
The pride of priests, so bloody when in power,
Are half so dreadful as a woman's vengeance.

SAVAGE.

IMPATIENT as was Bouverie Frazer to conclude the arrangements which had led him to Jamaica, he found his design of entering on the business delayed from day to day by the fair daughter of his host.

To the overseer's wedding succeeded other entertainments, all of which terminated in dancing. On these occasions Bouverie necessarily became the escort of Miss Gordon. To exhibit her handsome partner in the dance, to secure his attentions at the supper-table, seemed to

constitute the sole pleasure of her existence. Every one of her young companions congratulated her on having made a conquest of the young Caledonian, which, far from denying, she only parried with a playfulness which confirmed them in their belief.

Mr. Gordon saw his darling's face continually lighted up with smiles, and he was in no haste to dissolve the enchantment, till his guest, impatient to terminate his banishment from all he valued in existence, proposed to set out for Orange Grove, where he would await Mr. Gordon's leisure to join him.

Besides the necessity Mr. Leslie had found himself under of taking active measures to acquire possession, so to speak, of his West Indian property, which had for years been wasted and rendered unproductive by the rapacity and cruelty of his late relative's agent, his benevolent mind was actuated by higher and more liberal views. Since the

the estates became his, he had occupied himself in the discussion of various plans for ameliorating the condition of the negroes upon his plantations, and his young friend, ardent in the cause of the oppressed Africans, was anxious to make a practical trial of those theories to which he had often listened with intense interest. To do this it was necessary he should reside for some time among them; whether, therefore, the notary accompanied or followed him, at the end of a few weeks, was a matter of little consequence.

Mr. Gordon had nothing to object to this arrangement. He felt that he had trespassed too long on the time of Mr. Frazer, since the business he had to transact was of that complicated nature which would require both time and patience.

Yet the good notary dreaded the storm which he was certain he would be doomed to encounter from the vio-

lence of Zelinda on the loss of her present favourite.

For a time he had indeed flattered himself that the beauty and immense wealth of his little pet would have found their way to the heart of the Scottish youth; but as he observed, that far from regarding her with peculiar interest, the attentions of Bouverie were the mere result of politeness, he became convinced that the sooner they were separated the better; still he hesitated to inflict the salutary blow, when the proposal of Mr. Frazer to depart alone and immediately terminated his indecision.

When the usual hour of retiring drew near, Mr. Gordon became abstracted and uneasy; he anticipated the scene which would ensue when his daughter should be informed of the intended departure of their guest.

At length Bouverie arose, and taking the hand of Zelinda, began to utter his thanks for the kindness and hospitality he

he had experienced from her and her father during his stay at their mansion. At first she seemed not fully to comprehend his meaning; but when he declared his intention of setting out for Orange Grove before sunrise, she no longer attempted to conceal the passion with which he had inspired her.

Shocked at such a total want of feminine delicacy, Bouverie was about to glide out of the apartment; but perceiving his intention, the frantic beauty fell at his feet, and besought him not to leave her.

"I love—I adore you," she continued, "nor will I survive your loss. I am mad—distracted; every sense aches when your image presents itself to my imagination. I know you love me; you cannot—your dare not abandon me!"

Exhausted by the violence of her feelings, Zelinda fell into a violent hysterical paroxysm, and in a state bordering on insanity was carried to her own

chamber, attended by her weeping father.

Bouverie remained in the saloon, not in a state of mind the most enviable. He had frequently been disgusted by the freedom displayed by the young Creole; but being totally free from every kind of vanity, he entertained not the most distant idea that he had made a conquest of her heart, but merely imputed her conduct to manners different from those to which he had been accustomed.

He at last determined to write an adieu to Mr. Gordon, and without retiring to rest, proceed immediately on his way to Orange Grove.

While his hand yet rested on the bell to summon his attendant, the good old notary re-entered the saloon. In silence he took the hand of Bouverie.—"My young friend," he said, while his bosom heaved convulsively, and tears stole down his furrowed cheeks, "I grieve that

that my Zelinda should have so exposed herself. The poor girl, I speak it with shame, never knew control. Her feelings are warm, but her heart is the seat of every virtue, and her love for you appears so deep-rooted, that I much fear her life will fall a sacrifice to her disappointment. If you can love my child, all that I have shall be yours, and the prayers of a wretched parent will call down blessings on your head."

Though despising such weakness, Bouverie felt for the poor old man's sufferings. He cordially thanked him for the reliance he placed on his honour, and in return made him the confidant of his engagement with Miss Ferguson. He pointed out to him the propriety of his instantly departing from the house, and endeavoured to inspire him with the hope that Miss Gordon would soon forget one she had so recently known.

The old man assented to the justness of his reasoning, and with increased re-

spect saw him depart, having first promised to join him at Orange Grove, as soon as the situation of his daughter would permit of his leaving her.

Bouverie was greatly disconcerted at the strange conduct of the fair Creole; but, as he could attach no blame to himself, he strove to drive the unpleasant circumstance from his memory.

On reaching Orange Grove he proceeded to the house of the principal overseer, who had been apprised of his arrival in the island, and consequently expected him. He delayed, however, entering upon business till he could either benefit by the presence of Mr. Gordon, or be forced, through the folly of his daughter, to relinquish all hope of his assistance.

The intervening time he dedicated to inspecting the grounds, and making himself acquainted with the situation of the negroes. These he found wretched and sickly beyond even the ordinary condition

tion of the slaves on the neighbouring plantations. Far, however, from being disheartened by such unfavourable appearances, it only stimulated him to greater exertion.

In this task he received much aid from an intelligent youth, who filled the double capacity of surgeon and sub-overseer on the estate. Frequently had the firmness, prudence, and humanity of young Simpson saved these poor creatures from falling under the lash of his tyrannical principal, and they loved him accordingly.

To correct the faults of either individuals or collective bodies of men, it is first necessary to gain their confidence, by convincing them you have their real interest at heart. With this view, Bouverie Frazer began by ordering them a more nutritious diet, rendering their wretched huts habitable, and attaching to each a small portion of ground for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

A dilapidated

A dilapidated sugar-house was hastily fitted up as an infirmary, into which the sick were removed, and where they were carefully attended. The others were divided into classes, and tasks allotted to each, according to their age and strength.

These changes were suffered to operate some time before attempts were made at farther improvement; nor was their salutary tendency long in being perceived. Cheerfulness and health quickly took place of gloom and despair in the countenances of the poor negroes, and their tasks were executed in a neater and less slovenly manner.

Three weeks had elapsed since Bouverie Frazer's arrival at Orange Grove, and still Mr. Gordon had not arrived.

Though interested and amused by watching the progress of his scheme, and charmed by the judicious conversation of young Simpson, still Bouverie had ties and recollections which forcibly drew

drew him towards his distant native land, and he resolved no longer to delay proceeding to a settlement with the overseer.

On the evening previous to the day fixed on for commencing this business, Bouverie walked out, accompanied by Mr. Simpson, to inspect the improvements going on in the plantations. As they reached a shady copse, they were respectfully accosted by an old negro woman, who told them that some runaway slaves were certainly lurking in the adjoining thicket, as she had seen one or two strange faces peep out from behind some trees.

The two gentlemen immediately entered the wood, and being armed each with a fowling-piece, proceeded in the direction pointed out by the old woman. Before they had proceeded fifty yards, however, the report of a carbine startled Simpson, who was somewhat a-

head

head of his companion, when, turning round, he beheld with consternation Bouverie Frazer, with his clothes bloody, leaning against a tree for support.

He was rushing to his assistance when the wounded youth, pointing with his finger in an opposite direction, faintly articulated—"Secure the assassin."

Simpson made his way to the spot thus indicated, and at the distance of a few paces, led by the glittering of the butt-end of the carbine, beheld a negro couching amidst some tangled underwood. He quickly dragged forth the trembling culprit, and hastily retrod his steps towards his wounded friend.

With joy he perceived that the injury was slight indeed, the faintness Bouverie had experienced having arisen merely from loss of blood.

After binding up the arm with a handkerchief, they proceeded to examine the prisoner, whom Simpson had secured, in

in the first instance, by means of the belt in which his fowling-piece was slung.

Great was the surprise of Bouverie to behold in the culprit Sancho, the favourite negro of Miss Gordon, disguised in the vile habiliments of a field-slave.

The trembling wretch fell at Mr. Frazer's feet, and confessed that he had been ordered by missey to waylay and murder Bouverie; that he had lurked about the plantations till nearly famished with hunger before he found the opportunity to put his diabolical orders into execution.

Horror-struck at the base design, yet feeling for the good old notary, Frazer would instantly have set the criminal at liberty; but to this his more prudent friend objected. The tyranny of Mr. Gordon's fair daughter was not unknown at Orange Grove; and whatever contrition Sancho might profess while a prisoner,

soner, the dread of the punishment that would await the failure of his attempt might induce him to watch a more favourable opportunity to complete his design.

Convinced by this reasoning, Sancho was compelled to accompany them to the residence of the overseer, till his master's determination could be known concerning him.

On reaching the house, Bouverie was agreeably surprised to behold Mr. Gordon waiting his return on the terrace.

It was now almost dark, and willing to save the poor old man the shock of knowing the full extent of his darling's guilt, he would at the moment have remained silent; but Sancho no sooner perceived his master, than, falling at his feet, he made a full confession of his guilty errand.

When he had concluded—"Deliver me up to massey," he said, with frantic gestures;

gestures; "let her pince me with hot irons; let her cut off my ears; only save poor Cara; she kill poor Cara outright."

Bouverie thought that terror had deprived the poor fellow of his senses; but when somewhat more composed, he gave them to understand that such was the punishment threatened by his young mistress to be inflicted not only on himself, but on his favourite negress, if he failed to compass the death of the being against whom she had sworn eternal hatred.

The mortification and distress displayed by Mr. Gordon during Sancho's recital was truly pitiable. When it was finished, he entreated Mr. Fraser to suffer him to remain at Orange Grove, thus tacitly confessing that his power was inadequate to afford him protection from the rage of his daughter.

Making allowance for the strong motives which impelled Sancho to commit the deed, Bouverie hesitated not to receive

ceive him into the service of his employer; but, though grateful for the favour, this rude child of nature declared his desire to return and receive the threatened punishment, in order to save Cara from the anger of her mistress. "Missey kill Cara if me no return; me die with Cara;" was uttered in such heart-rending accents, that, at Bouverie's solicitation, the notary consented to transfer Cara to him also for a stipulated sum; and a messenger was immediately sent to conduct the negress to the Grove.

Not all the arguments brought against this horrible traffic by the most able logician—not the most glowing eloquence exerted in the British senate, in behalf of this oppressed race, ever impressed the evil consequences of negro slavery so forcibly on the mind of our young traveller as the foregoing transaction. He had beheld one of nature's fairest works converted into a fiend by the habitual and unchecked power of tyrannizing over

over a tribe of helpless human beings; he had beheld the poor slave sent forth, under a dread of the most horrible tortures, to become a murderer at the will of an imperious mistress. Still this poor abject being, the object of our pity, displayed some of the best feelings of our nature, whilst his proud persecutor retained no trace of human feeling except an overpowering egotism. Yet nature, who never suffers her laws to be infringed with impunity, held in her hand the even scales of retributive justice, and the pangs of the fair Zelinda, writhing under the agony of unlicensed passion and deep revenge, exhibited a picture of suffering infinitely greater than any tortures her malignity could have devised, or her power inflicted on the poor slave of her will.

The next day was dedicated to settling accounts with the overseer. Great indeed had been the waste and dilapidations committed on the valuable estates

estates and plantations of Orange Grove. Unwarrantable sums had also been advanced to the usurper of Mr. Leslie's rights during the short period he had been considered the proprietor, and for which Mr. Gordon affirmed the private fortune of the overseer was answerable. But as Bouverie's intentions were to avoid all farther litigation, he settled the business on more liberal terms than even the cupidity of the overseer had dared to hope, who, hugging himself on his ill-gotten gains, immediately took his departure from the Grove.

Unsolicited and unexpected on his part, Mr. Simpson was immediately placed by Bouverie at the head of the establishment, with a liberal salary, and authorized to select assistants on whom he could depend in the arduous task to which he was appointed.

Mr. Gordon, anxious and uneasy on his daughter's account, prepared to return home, and was accompanied part of

of the way by the two friends, who took an affectionate leave of him at the extremity of the plantation.

During their absence, Cara had arrived, and the transports with which she was hailed by her faithful Sancho were gratifying to the benevolent heart of her preserver.

The following day was appointed for their union, when a holiday was to be given to all the slaves, on the double account of the wedding and the departure of the detested overseer.

At an early hour the sound of the gong, which formerly inspired them with terror, now awoke them to mirth and jollity.

After the ceremony of the marriage, a plain but plentiful repast was spread beneath the shade of some banana trees, and the day terminated with dancing and various rude sports.

Few were the arrangements that now required the presence of Bouverie, and he

he immediately wrote to his agent in Port Royal to secure for him a passage on board the first fleet that was to sail for Britain.

The intervening time was spent by him and Mr. Simpson in carrying into effect those regulations which were deemed requisite for improving the estates, and permanently ameliorating the condition of the slaves. The original injustice committed in making them such could not now be remedied by granting them indiscriminately freedom. It would have been like opening the door of an aviary, and turning forth a flight of pampered nestlings, who scarcely knew the use of their wings, amongst the wild tribes of the field. Either would they have fallen a prey to the rapacity of birds of prey, or perished through inability to procure sufficient sustenance.

With the garb, the degrading appellation of slave was, however, banished from

from the territory of Orange Grove. Part of the ground was laid out in small farms, for which each negro had the option of paying a moderate rent in labour, or of working for a stipulated weekly sum.

Marriage was encouraged amongst them, and a reward bestowed on those mothers who reared the greatest number of healthy children. Instruction was provided, by founding a school for the education of the young, who were all declared free from the moment of their birth. Those who preferred it were taught some handicraft employment; small shops were opened for the sale of useful and rude ornamental articles; machinery was introduced for the abridgement of labour; and, in short, to anticipate the order of our history, Orange Grove in a few years exhibited a scene of contentment and activity, with which no other spot on this fertile island could compare.

The value of the plantations became progressively augmented with the improvement in the condition of the negroes, exhibiting a striking example to the rapacious slave-holder, that the labour of one active and industrious peasant is of ten times the value of that of a slave, whose only motive for exertion is the dread of the lash.

Bouverie beheld the dawn of those improvements which in a short time were to brighten into a more perfect day; and having taken an affectionate leave of Mr. Simpson, proceeded to Port Royal, where, full of youthful hope, and anticipated happiness, he embarked on board the vessel that was to waft him back to his native shores.

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.

"Some strange reverse of fortune must sure attend
This vast profusion, this extravagance
Of Heaven to bless me thus! 'Tis gold so pure,
It cannot bear the stamp without alloy.
Be kind, ye powers! and take but half away."

As each succeeding day displayed the virtues and rare qualities of Mary's mind and heart to her new friends, she became to them more and more an object of interest.

The shade of melancholy which, in spite of every exertion, would at times cloud her brow, gave great pain to her attached friends, and by the most delicate attentions they strove to dissipate her sorrow. Grateful for such kindness, the amiable girl redoubled her efforts to appear cheerful, and was not wholly unsuccessful.

successful. Hope buoyed up her spirits on hearing from Miss Beaumont that sir Theodosius continued rapidly to amend in health, and intended to return to Britain at the commencement of summer. "Then," thought Mary, "their long-promised visit to Scotland will take place, and the intercourse between Henrietta and her worthy uncle will unquestionably acquit me to the proud mother of Bouverie, without any interference on my part." The bright prospects which followed this train of thought were dwelt on till they acquired the force of reality; and the poor forlorn fugitive again, in idea, was pressed to the manly bosom of her lover, and once more became the pet of her revered friends.

For some weeks past, rapid preparations had been making at a villa adjoining Mrs. St. John's grounds, for the reception of its owner, the widow of the late marquis of Devereux.

Mary regretted the circumstance, as it

it would abridge her of many a delightful ramble through the extensive park and grounds belonging to the house, while the lively Miss St. John wearied herself with conjectures respecting the family of their new neighbour, and in hoping that her aunt would be prevailed on to visit the marchioness.

At the end of a few weeks conjecture terminated, as amidst the full glare and pomp of Asiatic splendour, arrived the marchioness of Devereux at her sumptuous villa; and the following morning at breakfast, Mrs. St. John delighted her niece by declaring her intention of calling to welcome its fair inmate, who was the niece of one of her oldest and most esteemed friends.

The succeeding Monday, Mrs. St. John and her niece had gone early to London to meet a gentleman on business. After breakfast, Mary wandered into the music-room. The simple air of Auld Robin Grey lay on the stand.

Sitting down before the harp, she accompanied herself in so affecting a style, and was so absorbed in the imaginary woes of Jenny, that tears stole down her beauteous cheeks, and she perceived not the entrance of a stranger, who stood motionless, viewing her with the utmost surprise.

Rising from the instrument, she started on perceiving she was not alone, but quickly recovering from her surprise, she entreated, with a graceful curtsey, to be informed who she had the honour of addressing.

"The marchioness of Devereux," replied the stranger, holding out her hand, "owes Miss St. John many apologies for the abrupt manner in which she presented herself; but the truth is, that furnished with proper credentials from my uncle to the lady of the mansion, I walked over to deliver my letter, when, finding the hall door open and unguarded, and attracted by the sweet sounds

sounds of your harp, and the still sweeter sound of your voice, I entered the apartment unperceived. What punishment am I to expect for my temerity?"

"From my severity," Mary replied, with a sweet smile, "your ladyship has nothing to dread; but I am afraid your disappointment will prove a sufficient punishment, when informed that my friends, Mrs. and Miss St. John, are both absent on business, which will detain them in London for a few days; I know it to be their intention, however, to wait on your ladyship the first moment of their return."

"I shall be grateful for the compliment," replied the marchioness, "for I understand Mrs. St. John's habits are extremely retired; may I flatter myself that you will so far honour me as to accompany your friends?"

Mary only bowed to the invitation, and, ringing for refreshments, entered

into conversation with her guest on some of the passing topics of the day.

At the request of her ladyship, Mary again sung the air that had so much charmed her on her entrance; tears filled her eyes as she finished, and looking mournfully in her face, she said—"Forgive me, my sweet young lady, but your manner, your accent, and the tones of your voice, recall the days of my youth, the fleeting pleasures of which have been followed by years of acute suffering. I could even fancy that your features resemble——but no, it cannot be."

The marchioness rose, walked towards the window, hummed an Italian air, and again resumed her seat, with every trace of feeling banished from her countenance.

The first impression made on the mind of Mary by the manners and appearance of the marchioness was unfavourable;

vourable; she seemed to her a mere heartless votary of fashion, till the strong traits of feeling she displayed, when listening to the concluding stanzas of the pathetic ballad, convinced her that the assumed levity of her manners was only a mask to conceal some hidden and deep-rooted sorrow.

As this idea took possession of her mind, her behaviour became at once tender and respectful; and as her visitor rose to take leave, Mary smilingly observed, that as she and Miss St. John had frequently been intruders on her ladyship's grounds, she believed she could conduct her home by a nearer and more delightful path than that leading by the public road.

Together they entered the conservatory, and having passed through an extensive shrubbery, Mary drew from her pocket a key which gave them entrance through a small wicket to the grounds

belonging to the marchioness. A shady path skirting the river led them to a gentle eminence, round which ran a circuitous path leading to a rustic temple open on both sides. Having entered this building, her ladyship was agreeably surprised to find herself in front of her own superb mansion.

For a few moments they rested on one of the moss-covered benches, and feasted their eyes on the smiling prospect around them. The marchioness remained absorbed in thought, whilst Mary in idea was contrasting the rich but tame scenery around her with the grand and sublime prospects of her native Scotland.

At length, recollecting herself, she arose, and with something of the playfulness of her happy days, presented the key of the wicket to her companion, saying—"Since I have not only confessed my fault, but now restore the key to its

its lawful owner, I, trust your sentence for our unwarranted intrusion will be merciful?"

"So merciful," rejoined marchioness, in the same playful tone, returning the key, "that I take you captive for this day."

All Mary's objections to this arrangement were over-ruled, and together they proceeded to the house. On entering a saloon, she was agitated to behold lord Maynard, whom the marchioness welcomed by the appellation of uncle.

His lordship, after embracing his niece, turned to pay his compliments to her companion, when—"Mary!" my dear Miss Ferguson!" were uttered by him in accents of unfeigned surprise.

Mary hailed the presence of her aged favourite with the greatest delight, and the expressions of his undiminished regard proved a balm to her wounded mind. But her attention was quickly

called to the marchioness, who, pale and faint, had sunk on a sofa.

To their anxious inquiries she replied not, but, as if endeavouring to recall some faint recollection to her mind, she repeated—"Ferguson! Miss Ferguson! did you say?—from Scotland too! Her voice! her manner!—Gracious Powers! can it be possible?" Then seizing Mary's hand, who hung over her in extreme agitation—"Tell me," she said, "ah, tell me, my sweet girl, who are your parents?"

In tremulous accents, Mary replied —"Alas! madam, I never knew the authors of my being. Deserted in early infancy, I was rescued from the hand of a cruel nurse by the humanity of the honourable Mr. Ferguson, by whom I was cherished and brought up as if I had been his own child."

"You are—you are my long-lost daughter!" exclaimed the marchioness, throwing

throwing her arms round the neck of the astonished girl; "the image of my lamented Charles, welcome to the heart and home of your mother, from whom you have been too long estranged."

"Be patient, my niece," interposed the venerable lord Maynard; "I have long suspected that in my young friend here I should one day be fortunate enough to claim a near relative, but on such a subject I forbore to agitate either of you, till conjecture had given place to certainty. Your present meeting is to me inexplicable, but as silence on my part is now no longer necessary, permit me, my sweet girl, to entreat that you would favour us with a sketch of your early history, which will at once either confirm or destroy our blissful anticipations."

Mary thus urged, commenced the painful task of reverting to past scenes, and to her departed paternal friend, whose loss she had never ceased to deplore,

plore. She gave a brief account, as related to her by Mr. Ferguson, of the burning of old Elspeth Anderson's cottage, her being afterwards transferred to the care of a cottager, from whose cruelty her humane benefactor had rescued her. She dwelt, with tears of gratitude in her eyes, on the paternal kindness with which she had been reared and educated by her revered benefactor and his amiable sister, lady Frazer. She mentioned the daring attempt which had been made to carry her off from Glencross Cottage in her infancy, the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Ferguson's will, and the subsequent persecution she underwent from sir Simon Frazer, and which eventually forced her to relinquish the protection of his amiable but unfortunate wife.

"To account for my residence among strangers," continued the fair narrator, turning to lord Maynard, while the blush of insulted virtue mantled on her pale

pale cheek, "I shall, with equal ingenuousness, disclose the painful occurrences of the last few months, which have driven me forth a wanderer, destitute of home or friends."

"You may save yourself the painful recital," said lord Maynard, "since I am fully informed, whether by sprite or fairy I leave you to guess, of the ordeal through which you have passed, and the added brightness with which you emerged from the fiery trial."

Mary now drew forth the locket which was given by Mr. Moncrief to her benefactor, as the only article which was saved from the rubbish of dame Anderson's cottage.

With tremulous haste the marchioness of Devereux applied her finger to a concealed spring, when the trinket flew open, and disclosed the portrait of a handsome officer in the prime of manhood.—"It is—it is my Charles," she exclaimed; "come to my arms, thou living image of my murdered husband.

Farther

Farther to doubt would now indeed be a crime," and she pressed the agitated Mary to her panting bosom.

From the arms of her parent she was only released to meet the embrace of an affectionate uncle.—" Soon," he said, " my dear niece, shall your unnatural kinsman, the worthless sir Simon Frazer, meet the just reward of his misdeeds. Soon shall every hope of succeeding to the immense possessions of your grandfather be wrested from his avaricious soul —soon shall the venerable lord William Frazer rest from his wanderings in search of the lost child of his darling boy, and hail the day which restores you to his arms."

" What new wonders am I about to hear?" said Mary, looking earnestly in the face of her uncle—" Is lord William Frazer indeed my grandfather?"

" You are—you are indeed the child of his bitterly-lamented son," replied the marchioness, while tears of anguish flowed down her cheeks. " Know, my dear

dear Mary, that I myself am the only child of the late duke of C——. Losing my mother, the sister of the worthy lord Maynard, in early infancy, I was educated in the mansion of my paternal aunt, till I reached an age deemed proper for being placed at the head of the duke's splendid establishment. Immersed in politics and projects of aggrandizement, he felt not for me the tenderness of a parent.

"Considered by him only as one means of forwarding his ambitious views, I was almost immediately after my arrival in London betrothed to the marquis of Devereux, whose age nearly doubled my own, and whose only recommendation was his great wealth, and extensive political influence. On account of my youth, the intended marriage was not to be consummated for two years, and, hurried forward in the giddy maze of pleasure, I thought not of the coming sacrifice.

"At

"At a ball given by lady Lindore, I met the honourable captain Frazer, then blooming in youth and manly beauty. I became his partner in the dance; his delicate attentions and elegant manners, so unlike the presuming coxcombs who usually fluttered round me, soon found their way to my heart, and I retired to my pillow to dream of nought but the handsome Caledonian.

"Suffice it to say, that from this night our intercourse was frequent, and that, at the end of two months, our fates were privately but indissolubly united. The presence of my youthful friend and confident, Caroline Lindore, alone sanctioned our union, which took place with the greatest privacy in an obscure church in the city; after which I returned to the mansion of the duke.

"Three months had rapidly fled away when the regiment to which Charles belonged was ordered to distant quarters. Awakened from our dream of love

love and security, my husband pressed me to accompany him, regardless of the splendid fortune I would forfeit when my disobedience was known to the duke.

"But I resisted his most earnest entreaties, from the dread that, not being of age, my inexorable father would tear me from the arms of the man I adored. As my altered shape, however, threatened to betray our secret, it was necessary to determine, and that quickly, on some means of averting a discovery. In this perplexing situation, I threw myself on the compassion of lady Lindore, who, while blaming our folly, pitied the state of suffering to which I was reduced.

"Buried in the intricacies of state affairs, the duke felt little interest in the movements of his daughter; I was therefore permitted to accompany lady Lindore to her estate in Berkshire for a few months, under the plea that country

try air and exercise were requisite for my health, which had, for a few weeks, been on the decline.

"At the hospitable mansion of lady Lindore, you, my dear Mary, saw the light, and was immediately conveyed to the care of a healthy nurse, while your youthful mother, on her recovery, immediately returned to the house of her parent, which was now regarded by her as a splendid prison.

"The attentions I was forced to receive from the marquis of Devereux filled me with disgust, and, except on very rare occasions, I mostly confined myself to my own chamber. I longed for twenty-one, when I might safely declare my choice, and openly claim the protection of my husband; but as time seemed with me to move with leaden wings, I received a letter from Charles, stating the probability of his regiment being among the first that would be ordered to the Continent, and adding, that he would

would make a run up to London from Scotland, where he then was on a visit to his worthy father.

"In the house of lady Lindore, I shortly afterwards met your father for the last time. He informed me, that he had made his cousin, Miss Frazer, the confident of our union and the birth of our daughter; but that, without my own permission, he did not think himself warranted to disclose my name.

"Whenever the dreaded order should arrive, he was to convey you, my child, to Scotland, and place you under the care of an aged domestic of his late mother, till Miss Frazer could remove you to the Highlands. She promised to watch over you with the affection of a mother, and there I was to join you on becoming of age, and claim the protection of lord William Frazer for myself and my child, should Charles not then be returned.

"Relieved

"Relieved by this arrangement, I urged your father to put it in immediate execution, to disclose my name to Miss Frazer, and urge her to favour me with frequent accounts of my Mary. One short hour was I only indulged with the presence of my adored Charles.

"Scarcely had he time to reach the inn before the coach set off for the north: never did I see him more!"

The marchioness was here overpowered by the acuteness of her feelings, and some time elapsed before she was able to proceed with her eventful story.

"Previously to the embarkation of his regiment, Charles informed me, that he had found time to place our dear infant under the care of dame Anderson, but that he had been disappointed in not meeting with his cousin, who had left his father's house before his arrival. He had, however, communicated to her every thing it was necessary for her

to

to know, and entrusted his letter to her brother, sir Simon Frazer, who was shortly to join her at Castle Frazer.

"From the moment my unfortunate Charles landed on a hostile shore, my anxiety for his safety was such, that week after week elapsed without exciting my wonder that Miss Frazer had delayed to address me.

"Swallowed up in one powerful and prominent idea, I became comparatively indifferent to every lesser evil, when I was one morning summoned to the private study of my stern father.—'Lady Mary,' he said, with even more than his usual haughtiness, 'it is my pleasure that on your next birthday you should become marchioness of Devereux.' He then presented me a draft on his banker for a thousand pounds, told me the family jewels he had ordered to be new set for the occasion, and requested I would spare no expence in providing my nuptial habiliments, but draw on him

him for any sums I might require. With a silent bend of his head he then dismissed me, when, in a state of violent agitation, I sought refuge in my own chamber.

"You, my kind uncle, were not then in England, and on lady Lindore's bosom alone could I pour out the agony of my soul. She soothed with words of comfort the perturbation of my mind. More than two months had still to elapse before the arrival of the dreaded day, and she promised in that time to devise the means of conveying me to Scotland, and placing me under the protection of the father of my Charles.

"When that day did arrive, it found me a raving maniac. Almost the first shot that was fired in the crusade against Paris stretched my husband a lifeless corpse on the ground. The news reached me through the medium of the Gazette, and alone and unsupported I sunk senseless on the floor. When recollection

collection returned, I found myself in bed, weak and feeble as an infant, and Caroline Lindore weeping over me.

"As I gradually recovered strength, I learned from my gentle friend that in the delirium of the fever my attachment to captain Frazer had been disclosed to the proud duke, my father, who had never after entered my chamber.

"Youth and a good constitution at length, however, prevailed, and at the end of many months I was declared out of danger. My first care was to write to Scotland, but here a new trial awaited me: by the return of post I received a letter from sir Simon Frazer, containing the melancholy news that his sister was no more, and that dame Anderson, with her infant charge, had both perished in the flames, her cottage having been accidentally burnt to the ground.

"A long and severe illness succeeded this heart-rending intelligence; and

scarcely was my health restored ere I was commanded by my unfeeling father to prepare to receive the marquis of Devereux as my future lord.

"Reckless of what became of me, and unable to contend with the violence of the enraged duke, I was led an unresisting victim to the altar. Almost immediately after the ceremony, I accompanied my husband to India; but neither wealth nor splendour could give ease to my lacerated heart, and the far-famed, the envied, and admired marchioness of Devereux never enjoyed a moment's repose. Even the caresses of my darling boy, your youthful brother, only reminded me of the treasures I had lost, and often have I bathed his infant face with tears of heartfelt bitterness. About a year ago I returned to this country, a second time a widow. My father's death had preceded that of the marquis of Devereux by several years. Death had also deprived me of the friend of my youth,

the

the amiable Caroline Lindore; but in the society of her heart-broken mother, in the soothing kindness of my venerated uncle, and the tender endearments of my darling boy, I found at last a balm to my wounded mind.

"The letter of sir Simon Frazer, which had at the time appeared to me sufficient evidence of the death of you, my beloved Mary, was not regarded in the same point of view by my uncle. Besides, the mercenary character of the baronet, and the fact of his being next heir to his uncle's vast possessions, certainly afforded, to a mind like his, a strong temptation to conceal from lord William Frazer the existence of a grandchild; and impatiently have we waited the liberation of that worthy nobleman from France, that together we might investigate the truth or fallacy of his statement.

"My uncle told me, when he was last in London, that he had met frequently

with a Miss Ferguson, who greatly resembled me; but I knew not till the happy meeting of to-day, that he had the slightest grounds to suspect that you were indeed my lost child."

"When the news of the fracas at Beaumont Lodge reached London, I was enjoying a quiet evening with your strenuous friend and confidant, Miss Beaumont," said lord Maynard, turning to his niece. "Greatly affected by her brother's dishonourable conduct, and the thoughtless folly of his lady, she gave immediate orders for her departure next day, in order to afford you the sanction of her presence in a situation so trying. From her I learned as much of your early history as to excite strong hopes that you were indeed my lost niece, and these hopes were strengthened and confirmed by her future communications. Your firm and determined conduct, under the suspicions of your proud friend, Mrs. Fraser, made me more and more desi-

rous

rous to afford you countenance and protection, but I restrained my feelings till I could present you to the world and your early benefactors as my nearest and dearest relative. The fortunate meeting between you and your mother has accelerated that desirable event, and I trust a few weeks will restore you to all the delights of love and friendship." Farther conversation was here prevented by the entrance of the marquis of Devereux and his preceptor.

With maternal pride, she presented to her son her long-lost and deeply-lamented daughter; and when pressed to the heart of her youthful brother, the full tide of joy nearly overpowered the agitated Mary. Resuming, however, her self-possession, she received the congratulations of Mr. Clifford, with the ease and grace which marked all her actions.

The presence of this gentleman and the announcement of dinner afforded a

relief to the high-wrought feelings of our little party; and in the evening Mary returned to the villa of her friends, escorted by the youthful marquis, in order to make preparations for her final removal to her future home.

With the lark she was aroused by the voice of Ormond, who, too happy to sleep, had run over to invite his new-found sister to join him in a morning ramble. Together they traversed the grounds around the house; and Mary, delighted with the vivacity of the charming boy, entered with an interest into all his little schemes, which endeared her still more to his youthful heart.

Tears of delight stole down the cheeks of the happy mother as the youthful pair entered the breakfast-saloon, with countenances flushed with exercise and eyes sparkling with pleasure. "I have given Mary a present of Tamerlane, mother, and I wish you would let James take him to town to be fitted with a saddle,

saddle, as we are to take a long ride to-morrow before breakfast."

A smiling assent was given; and the rest of the day passed in the calm enjoyment of domestic affection.

Sincerely did the benevolent Mrs. St. John and her niece rejoice in the fortunate discovery that had taken place in their absence.

Scarcely a day passed that the two families did not meet; and while the seniors enjoyed the pleasure of unrestrained and friendly converse, Miss St. John became the companion of Mary and her brother, in many a pleasant ride to explore the beauties of the surrounding country.

CHAPTER XI.

He hails his native shore, and presses on,
Fancying that, rugged toil and peril o'er,
He shall repose him on the myrtle bed
Of calm domestic peace. How vain the hopes!
How short the prospect of believing man!

THOMSON.

PROSPEROUS gales quickly wafted Bouverie Frazer to his native shores. Having been informed in the last letter he received from Mary before leaving the island, that she and her friends were almost immediately to leave London, he had scarcely landed ere he threw himself into the Edinburgh mail, so impatient was he to embrace the dear friends he had left behind.

On reaching that city, he flew on the wings of love to the apartments of his parents. Here he beheld his assembled friends,

friends, who had met to welcome the arrival of his brother; but his eye wandered in vain round the chamber, in quest of her who was dearer to him than all the world besides.

The embarrassed looks of all present filled his soul with dread; and unable longer to control his feelings, he uttered, in hurried accents, the name of Mary.

With as much tenderness as circumstances would admit, the occurrences of the past months were made known to the impatient youth.

Rage, indignation, and sorrow, by turns assailed his mind, and he declared his determined resolution to set out the moment he had delivered up his accounts, &c. to Mr. Leslie, in order to chastise the seducers of his lost love.

His gallant brother promptly offered himself as the companion of his journey; and the Monday of the following week was fixed on for their departure.

While captain Frazer trembled for

the issue of their enterprise, he yet gloried in the undaunted spirit of his brave boys; and their affectionate mother still hoped that some circumstance might occur to prevent the consequences she dreaded. Happily in this hope she was not disappointed, for the next post brought to Mr. Murray the anxiously-looked-for letter from sir Theodosius Beaumont, in answer to the communication he had addressed to him on the subject of Miss Ferguson's disappearance.

With a candour that did him honour, the baronet blamed himself for his base and unmanly conduct towards an innocent and lovely girl, whom, by all the laws of hospitality, he was bound to protect. He gave due praise to the steady virtue and dignified conduct of the injured Mary; and concluded by informing Mr. Murray that the amiable girl, hurt by the unkind and cruel suspicions of Mrs. Frazer, had determined to employ

ploy her talents to secure an honourable independence.

"That she is safe under the protection of some one of my good sister's numerous friends, is the only consolation I can taste myself or impart to you, under present circumstances, since Juliana obstinately refuses to divulge Miss Ferguson's abode, having, it seems, promised to maintain an inviolable silence on the subject. How, my dear sir," concluded the baronet, "can I deprecate your displeasure for my neglect of your lovely niece? That my conduct admits of no apology is most true, but the forgiveness of my angel wife will, I trust, be followed by that of her revered uncle."

Inclosed in the foregoing were a few lines from Miss Beaumont, assuring Mr. Murray that Mary was safe, under the protection of one of her oldest and most esteemed friends, though without her own consent she was not at liberty to disclose the place of her residence. She

commended the high-spirited girl for the step to which the ungenerous suspicions of Mrs. Frazer had impelled her; and concluded by saying, that, while she had a home to receive her, no unjust reproaches should ever again wound her gentle spirit.

As Mr. Murray concluded reading these communications, the eyes of captain Frazer and his son were, for the first time, fixed on the tender wife and affectionate mother with looks of severity, while Bouverie exclaimed—"It is to your ill-timed severity then, madam, that I owe my present sufferings?"

Mrs. Frazer rose in silence, and left the room for a few moments. On her return, she put into the hands of her son a copy of the letter she had addressed to Mary, as also the blank cover in which the draft was returned. "Think more justly of your mother, Bouverie, than to deem me capable of bruising the broken reed, even had I known so little of the heart

heart I have often studied, as to suppose that Mary would for one moment deviate from the strict path of integrity; but some demon of mischief has, I fear, been sporting with her repose. Let us rejoice, however, that she is safe for the present, and I trust, ere long, will be restored to her anxious friends."

Bouverie pressing the hand of his mother, entreated her to pardon his petulance; and the remainder of the day was passed in the greatest harmony by the assembled friends.

Whether from the fatigue of his rapid journey, the shock he received on reaching his home, the change of climate, or from all these causes combined, might be difficult to determine; but certain it is, that after passing a restless night, Bouverie was unable to leave his bed on the following morning.

For several weeks his anxious friends, by turns, watched by his pillow, ere his safety

safety was fully ascertained by the medical attendants.

In the mean time letters were received from lord William Frazer, giving hopes of his speedy return to his native island, on the expected conclusion of peace.

Either owing to this circumstance, or to the manly and energetic remonstrance of captain Charles Frazer, sir Simon at length consented to withdraw the action against his father, and suffer all differences betwixt them to be adjusted by two advocates, mutually chosen with this view.

He also relaxed in his tyranny to his unfortunate lady and son, to the last of whom he granted permission to accompany the junior captain Frazer to London, in order to meet and welcome his uncle's return from France.

This excursion was only delayed till Bouverie should have acquired sufficient strength to be of their party; and at the

termination

termination of six weeks from his arrival in Edinburgh he again left it, in the faint hope of discovering the retreat of his beloved Mary.

In conformity to the taste and habits of captain Frazer, they embarked on board a Leith packet, in preference to performing the journey by land, and in four days reached their destined port.

The view of the shipping in the Thames, and the continual bustle which everywhere met their eye, filled the youthful bosom of William Frazer with wonder and delight.

Captain Frazer without delay established himself and his companions in a fashionable hotel in Albemarle-street, whither lord William Frazer had requested all letters for him to be directed, in order that they might be at hand to receive this venerable nobleman on his arrival.

Charles Frazer, as a reward for his gallant conduct during the battle of Trafal-

gar,

gar, had not only been posted, but was also appointed to the Mars of seventy-four guns, then laid up at Chatham to undergo a thorough repair.

Determined to enjoy his present leisure, and at the same time amuse his friends, he called on several brother officers then in town, and among others, on captain Riversdale, with whom he had served on board the Jason.

At his lodgings he met his cousin, lord Riversdale, who gave him a pressing invitation to a ball and supper on the following evening, to be given by his mother on the happy occasion of the peace, and the safe return of her nephew.

With all the frankness of his profession, he declared how happy he would have been to avail himself of his lordship's civility, but added, that he was burdened with two companions, neither of whom had ever before been in London. The invitation was consequently extended

tended to his friends, and in their name accepted by the gallant captain.

The name of lady Riversdale had been mentioned with high commendation in Mary's letters to her lover; with joy, therefore, he prepared to fulfil his engagement, in the vague hope of learning something concerning the fair fugitive.

The company assembled in the splendid apartments of lady Riversdale was rather select than numerous. On the entrance of the three young men, lord Riversdale immediately led them forward, and presented them to his mother.

When the name of Bouverie Frazer was mentioned, lady Riversdale fixed her eyes on the face of her son; but the cheerful smile which met her anxious glance convinced her that she had no longer any thing to dread for his peace.

Having conversed a few minutes with the lady of the mansion, they gave place to new visitors, who also claimed her attention,

tention, and were sauntering through the apartments when the marquis and marchioness of Devereux and the honourable Miss Frazer were announced.

Bouverie was standing, with his back to the entrance, listening to his brother, who was pointing out to him and William the beauties of a superb sea-piece, when the latter, suddenly relinquishing the arm of the captain, bounded across the apartment with the speed of an antelope, and threw his arms round the neck of an elegant female, who stood by the couch on which lady Riversdale was seated.

"My dear, dear Mary!"—"my darling William," was uttered by the delighted pair, while the animated boy hung in an ecstasy of joy round the neck of his recovered favourite.

Lord Riversdale was the first to comprehend the scene, and whispered to the astonished marchioness to conduct her daughter to his mother's dressing-room, when

when William bounded back to gladden the heart of the disconsolate Bouverie with the news of his fortunate discovery, and the next moment beheld him at the feet of his fair enslaver.

The marchioness now took the hand of young Frazer, and led him to an anti-room, in order to give the lovers time to compose their agitated feelings. The striking resemblance which her youthful companion bore to the husband of her choice made her inquire his name; and when she learned his near affinity to one she had never ceased to mourn, her agitation became extreme.

Without knowing the source of her perturbation, William essayed all his powers to soothe and compose her feelings, and was not wholly unsuccessful. She entered into conversation with the engaging youth, and listened with great interest to the description he gave of the distress they had all suffered from the disappearance of his favourite—"My uncle,

uncle, lord William Frazer, is momentarily expected home from France," he continued; "and he loves Mary so dearly, that it would have almost broken his heart had she not been found."

The marchioness, in order to divert the painful feelings which she found rising in her bosom at the mention of her amiable father-in-law, expressed a wish to return to the saloon, and William, anxious to find Charles, and impart to him the glad tidings, willingly attended her thither.

The dancing had already commenced, and they found lady Riversdale quietly seated in a corner, conversing with lord Maynard, whom business had detained at home long after the departure of the ladies. She had scarcely related the meeting between Mary and her lover before they appeared. Bouverie was introduced to lord Maynard, who was much prepossessed with his manners and appearance. The now-happy youth saw his

his Mary caressed and respected by all who approached her; but as yet he was ignorant of the near relationship in which she stood to her present protectors.

William Frazer had long ranged about the rooms before he discovered Charles, who was dancing with Miss Riversdale, and who now approached to pay his compliments to Mary; he was introduced by her to the marchioness of Devereux and her son, and lord Maynard, from whom he received a pressing invitation to breakfast with his brother and William in Grosvenor-square.

Overpowered by their various feelings, the marchioness and her party retired at an early hour from the festive scene. In the solitude of her chamber, Mary recalled the events of the evening.

When Bouverie first entered the dressing-room of lady Riversdale, the joy of beholding him for a time drove every other idea from her memory; but the recollection of his mother's illiberal

suspicions

suspicions flashing on her mind, she withdrew from his embrace, gravely saying—"Since last we parted, Frazer, an unfortunate occurrence has rendered me an alien to my early friends. My heart tells me I have been judged with undeserved severity; but however great may be my sufferings, no consideration shall induce me to renew an intercourse with those who have misjudged and cruelly treated me in my days of adversity. Have you seen your mother since your landing, Bouverie?"

"I have," he replied, "and come with full powers to vindicate her from every blame."

"You have then undertaken a difficult—I may say an impossible task," Mary rejoined, with a sigh; "but this is no time for explanation. Call on me tomorrow at Grosvenor-square," putting into his hand a card of lord Maynard's, "when you shall yourself be the judge betwixt us."

"Suffer

"Suffer me first to whisper in your ear," he said, playfully snatching a kiss from her ruby lips, "that the letter which gave you so much offence was never written by my mother. The one she transmitted, inclosing the draft you returned, was of a very different tenor, as you shall shortly be convinced; and no one, believe me, of your friends, has suffered more from your desertion than this inestimable woman, who has a mind fully capable of appreciating your value."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

Joy is in every face, without a cloud. DRYDEN.

I've seen the morning rise wi' fairest light,
The day unclouded, sink in calmest night;
I've seen the spring rin wimpling through the plain,
Increase, and join the ocean without stain.
The bridegroom may be blithe, the bride may smile,
Rejoice through life, an' a' your fears beguile.

GENTLE SHEPHERD.

THE following morning the three young men were punctual to their engagement in Grosvenor-square.

They were received by the marchioness and her uncle, lord Maynard, with that winning courtesy for which they were so much distinguished. Bouverie's eyes, however, wandered to the door, in search of her who was never absent from his thoughts, when a slight tap on one of

of the windows looking into a small conservatory drew his attention, and he beheld Mary, flushed with health and exercise, waiting to be admitted.

Springing forward, he opened the window, and, pressing her extended hand, led her to the breakfast-table.

"Where have you been this morning, my little fugitive?" said lord Maynard, saluting her cheek; "I have been vainly searching for this hour all over the house and garden."

"I went with Ormond," she replied, "to swim Cæsar in the Serpentine River, and we hastened home with the greatest speed, lest we had been behind our visitors."

The marquis now bounced into the room, followed by his favourite, and after exchanging the morning salutation with the visitors, he said to the marchioness—"Do you know, mamma, that sister Mary outstripped me in a

race homeward, though I am such a swift runner?"

"No wonder, my love, for an expected pleasure awaited her at the goal," her ladyship replied, smiling to Bouverie; "but I trust, my love, you were not induced to follow this wild brother of yours in his career through the streets?"

"The park was the scene of my exploits," she rejoined, laughing, "and the hour too early to dread either interruption or observation."

The conversation now became general; and when breakfast was finished, the lively marquis, accompanied by William Frazer, proceeded to take a ride.

Bouverie then requested a few moments conversation with Mary alone, who blushing, replied, that her kind friends were equally interested with herself in the explanation he proposed to give

give of the letter which had driven her to seek an asylum among strangers.

She then produced the letter she had received from Mrs. Frazer, and requested Bouverie to be himself the judge betwixt her and his mother. On casting his eyes over the contents, his face assumed the paleness of death.—"Could my mother do this!" he exclaimed; "my respectable mother! and then deny it to her son! Oh, Mary! Mary! be merciful," he continued, "nor punish the child for the errors of the parent."

Mary threw a beseeching look on her uncle, who, pitying the evident distress of the lover, inquired what explanation of Mrs. Frazer's conduct he had alluded to the night before?

Bouverie took from his pocket the copy of the letter which his mother had assured him she had written to Mary, and presented it in silence to lord Maynard. The lofty feeling and the maternal tenderness which breathed through

every line of this epistle, so unlike the constrained and vulgar composition of the other, forcibly struck his lordship, and on carefully comparing the hand-writing, he became convinced that the one his niece had actually received was a forgery. That sir Theodosius Beaumont, with all his faults, should condescend to such an act, he could not believe, and his suspicions immediately fixed on Mrs. Lessington.

With joy inexpressible did the agitated youth listen to the opinion of lord Maynard. Even the renewed hope of gaining the hand of Mary was, for the moment, swallowed up in the delight of knowing his revered mother free from an act of duplicity that would for ever have sunk her in his estimation. Turning his eyes, beaming with love and tenderness, on the fair object of his first and only love, he entreated her once more to return to the home and heart of her attached and earliest friends.

In

In forcible language, he described the misery her silence had occasioned them, the journey Mr. Murray undertook in search of her, the agony he himself endured on landing on his native shores, which only admitted of alleviation from the assurance of her safety, conveyed in a letter from sir Theodosius Beaumont to the worthy solicitor.

"My young friend," said the marchioness, "I will no longer keep you in suspense. The situation of Mary is much altered since last you parted. She was then a friendless orphan, unconnected in life, and wholly dependent on the kindness and benevolence of your family; now she is rich in the gifts of fortune, blessed with an affectionate mother and tender relatives. When poor and friendless, you offered her your hand and heart, and, if I rightly interpret the looks of my daughter, every worldly good would be valueless if deprived of your affection. Receive her,

then, from a mother's hand, and may you be as happy as my warmest wishes can make you!"

Bouverie clasped the blushing girl to his beating heart, and in animated language thanked the marchioness for the precious gift—"And her uncle too," said lord Maynard, presenting his hand to his future nephew, "ought to claim a share in your gratitude, as the sphynx who unriddled the mystery that threatened to separate two attached hearts."

More and more astonished, Bouverie entreated an explanation of the wonders which surrounded him, which was succinctly given by lord Maynard after the ladies retired to dress.

Captain Frazer, who had been calling at lady Riversdale's, attracted thither by the lively Jane, now entered, and was shortly after followed by the youthful equestrians.

They were soon made partakers in the general joy. William Frazer was frantic

frantic with delight, in finding a near relative in his favourite Mary, and anticipated the satisfaction it would convey to the mind of his disconsolate mother.

The day was spent in the greatest harmony by our joyous circle, and the young men did not repair to their hotel till a late hour in the evening.

Before retiring to rest, Mary poured out her heart to her beloved lady Frazer. She also wrote to the mother of her Bouverie, detailing the means by which she had been betrayed into a belief of her unkindness. This pleasing duty performed, she threw herself on her bed, to dream of future happiness.

The next morning, the young friends had the happiness of welcoming lord William Frazer and his reverend companion to their native Britain, after a long and enforced absence.

This venerable nobleman was in part prepared for the blessing which awaited

him. In travelling between Paris and Calais, they stopped at a small inn on the road during the night. As they were about to sit down to supper, a request was sent in by a countryman of their own, requesting a few minutes conversation with his lordship. Thinking he might be in distress, orders were given for his immediate admittance; but great indeed was the surprise of both gentlemen, to behold in the stranger the old servant of sir Simon Frazer.

With much circumlocution, he confessed the many nefarious transactions in which he had been employed by his late master. He detailed the attempt he made by his orders to carry off Mary from Glencross Cottage when an infant, who he believed to be a near relation of sir Simon's, from some letters he had in his possession. He related the means employed by him to abstract the will of the late Mr. Ferguson, which he carried with him to France, as well as articles

of

of separation betwixt the baronet and his lady, in order to ensure the promised reward.

In corroboration of the truth of his story, he put the papers above mentioned into the hands of lord William Frazer. One of the letters was that from his late lamented son to Helen Frazer, entrusted to the care of her brother, but which the baronet, from motives of cupidity, had wholly suppressed, and the non-arrival of which had given so much pain to the last days of the gentle Helen.

On her deathbed, the affectionate girl confided to lady Frazer and Mr. M'Gregor the secret of her cousin's marriage, and the birth of his daughter, which he had entrusted to her in confidence; but of the name of his wife she was ignorant, or the fate of his infant daughter, whom he had failed to conduct to Scotland, though he obtained her solemn promise to be a mother to his child,

till circumstances should permit him to acknowledge his marriage.

At the request of Marion Frazer, the worthy divine took a journey to the South, in order to communicate these particulars to the father of Charles, and it was on this imperfect information that his lordship was travelling in quest of these dear relics of a beloved son, when he was detained by the decree of the French ruler. How sincerely did he rejoice at the fortunate discovery, that in the orphan Mary he should embrace the daughter of his lamented Charles!

The meeting between lord William and these dear relatives was indescribably affecting; again and again he pressed these new-found treasures to his bosom, while tears of mingled joy and grief flowed down his furrowed cheeks.

After a time lord Maynard, in pity to the feelings of the little party, claimed the notice of lord William as an old acquaintance;

quaintance; and the young men shortly after entering, some degree of composure was restored.

After a few days given to rest by the travellers, the united party set out for Scotland, where they arrived in safety, and were received by their affectionate friends with the sincerest joy.

In proportion to the marchioness's self-condemnation for the weak terrors which had prevented her braving the anger of the duke her father, and thus committing her infant to the care of strangers, was her gratitude to the protectors and friends of Mary. To the desolate lady Frazer she particularly attached herself; nor was she ever weary of listening to the anecdotes of the early days of her child.

Unwilling to expose his unworthy nephew to public scorn or legal punishment, lord William Frazer, after a few days given to the delights of friendship and affection, consulted with Mr. Mur-

ray

ray how best to compel him to relinquish the property he had wrested from the rightful owners, and to relinquish in future all control over his unfortunate lady and her son.

Furnished with an attested copy of the important proofs of his guilt, the worthy solicitor once more set out for Glencross Cottage.

At first he found sir Simon violent and refractory, but having suffered him to exhaust the ebullitions of his rage, he quietly placed the important documents before him, saying, that the agent of his villany was in custody, ready to appear against him in a court of justice, if he did not speedily and unconditionally accede to the terms proposed by his good and lenient uncle.—"When you have considered the subject, baronet," Mr. Murray continued, "I shall expect to be honoured with your final determination;" and so saying, he took up his hat and left the room.

He

He was leisurely proceeding to the house of the steward, when a message from sir Simon Frazer recalled him to the house.—"This is an awkward affair, Mr. Murray," he said, as the solicitor re-entered the room; "but the sooner a disagreeable business is got over the better: is the agreement ready?"

Mr. Murray's clerk was called in, who read the instrument by which sir Simon Frazer bound himself to relinquish the estates and other property belonging to the late Mr. Ferguson, in terms of that gentleman's will; to resign the guardianship of his wife and son to his uncle, lord William Frazer, constituting him and Mr. Murray joint trustees of his property for their behoof, and banishing himself for life to the Continent, in consideration of receiving the annual sum of one thousand pounds for his sole and separate use.

This deed being properly signed and witnessed, Mr. Murray took leave of the

erring

erring man, who, strange as it may seem, evinced no outward symptoms of remorse for the depth of disgrace he had brought upon himself.

In four days he left Glencross Cottage, and shortly afterwards embarked for the Continent, accompanied by Mrs. Dear, who was now the mother of two children.

Mrs. Saunderson and John Brown were reinstated in their former station at the Cottage; nor was poor pussey forgotten, who had been kindly cherished by the good old dame for the sake of her dear absent bairn.

Peace having once more revisited the amiable circle assembled in the hospitable mansion of lord William Frazer, Bouverie pléd his cause so effectually with the gentle Mary, that, with the approbation of her dear relatives, she consented to become his at the end of a fortnight.

After the ceremony, the new-married pair

pair retired to Glencross Cottage, where in a few days they were joined by their friends.

In the happiness of their darling Mary, lord William Frazer and the marchioness endeavoured to forget their regrets for the husband and son they had so long mourned; while lady Frazer, amid her native woods, blessed in the affection of her son, recovered a degree of tranquillity to which she had been long a stranger.

With ease of mind, the declining health of captain Frazer gradually improved. He was instantly reinstated in the possession of his estate by lord William Frazer and Mr. Murray, and reimbursed for the heavy expences he had incurred in the action.

He rejoiced with the faithful partner of his pilgrimage in the prosperity of their children, and looked forward to the union of the blooming Marion with William Frazer at no very distant period.

Amidst

Amidst the happiness of his relatives, captain Charles Frazer alone looked sad; and no sooner had he attended the bridal festivities of his brother than he departed, as he said, to look after the Mars. But the truth was, that the image of Jane Riversdale had travelled along with the young sailor, and "*nothing venture, nothing win*," being his motto, in love as well as in war, he posted back to London, and commenced such a brisk siege against the heart of his fair enslaver, that, in one month after his departure from Edinburgh, he called for the congratulations of his friends on his union with Miss Riversdale.

The young couple shortly after arrived on a visit to their friends in Scotland, accompanied by lord Riversdale, and soon it appeared that the virtues and graces of Emily Frazer had made a deep impression on his lordship's heart.

The gentle Emily, at the earnest request of her new sister, accompanied her to

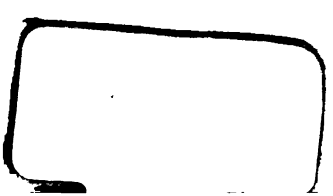
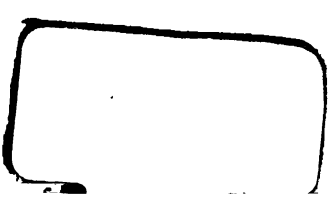
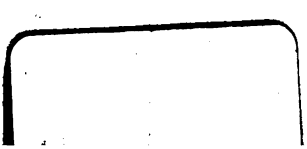
to London, where, at the expiration of ten months, with the approbation of the relatives on both sides, she became lady Riversdale.

The following spring, Mary had the happiness of pressing to her heart the now happy lady Beaumont and her worthy sister-in-law, to whose unwearied kindness she owed so much in the hour of her adversity. Sir Theodosius, cured of his passion and happy in the affection of his Henrietta, embraced Mary with true brotherly affection, while Bouverie extended to him the hand of friendship.

Loving and beloved, constituting the happiness of their parents and friends, lived Bouverie and his Mary.

Amidst prospects the most cheerless and desolate, she had never sunk into utter despondency, and now, when elevated to the height of prosperity, her greatest pleasure consisted in the exercise of enlarged affections, and in diffusing

ing comfort and happiness to all who moved within the sphere of her influence.

FINIS.

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